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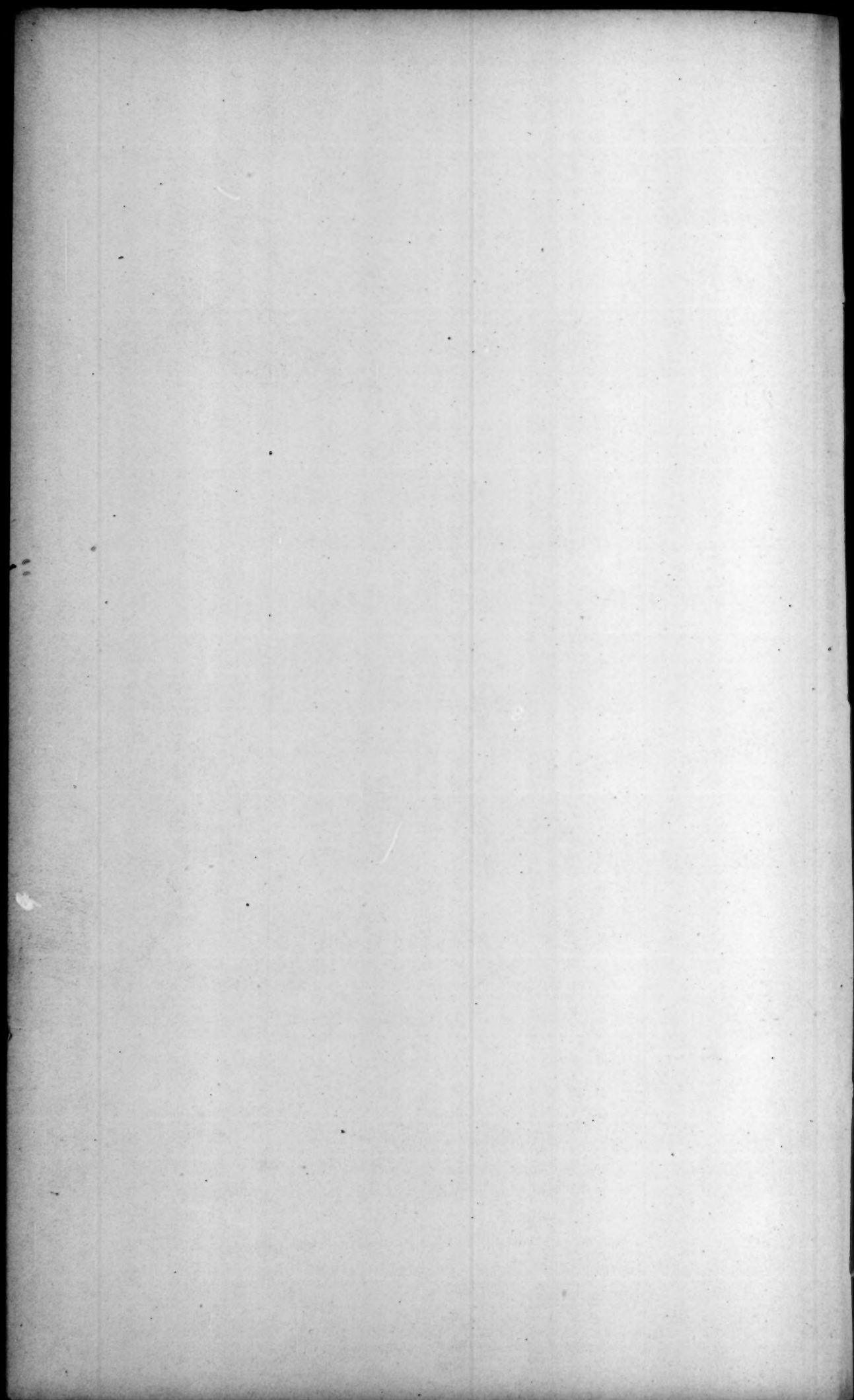
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NEW-ENGLAND TRAGEDIES

IN PROSE

BY ROWLAND H. ALLEN

I. THE COME OF THE QUAKERS  
II. THE WITCH-CAT DELUSION

BOSTON  
NICHOLS AND NOYES

THE  
NEW-ENGLAND TRAGEDIES  
IN PROSE.

BY  
ROWLAND H. ALLEN.

- I. THE COMING OF THE QUAKERS.
- II. THE WITCHCRAFT DELUSION.

BOSTON:  
NICHOLS AND NOYES.

1869.



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3 CORNHILL, BOSTON.



## PREFACE.

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THE verse of Longfellow has been inspired again by the Muse of History. His theme is not a sportive one. The hand which has been wont to charm us with its blithe and joyous play, in this new motion sets ten thousand hearts athrob to the cadences of complaint. Yet our beloved poet does not disown himself. Ever and anon this minor melody gives way to the bright-toned, familiar calls of charity and candor.

To such laments for the two faults of the Fathers, we will listen without repining ; for we can foster the silent hope, meanwhile, that the next strain we hear will be one of noble praise for their grand and myriad virtues.

Till then we shall be curious to know how much is fact, and how much fancy, in the latest work of the "Laureate of America."

MOUNT BELLINGHAM, November, 1868.

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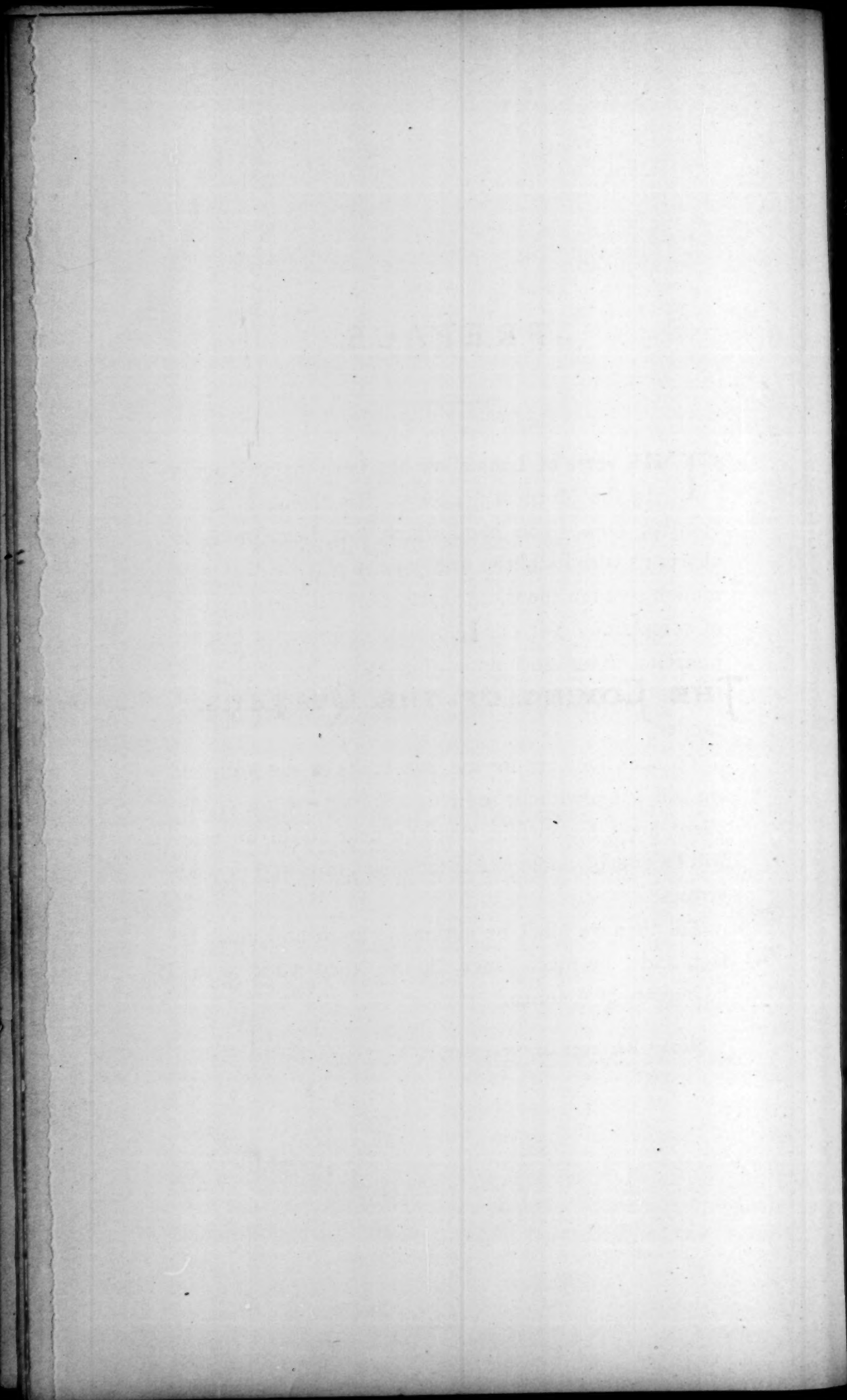
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MOUNT BELLINGHAM, November, 1868.





I.

THE COMING OF THE QUAKERS.

NEW-YORK AND HARTFORD

BY J. M. W.

THE NEW-YORK AND HARTFORD

AND HARTFORD

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THE  
NEW-ENGLAND TRAGEDIES  
IN PROSE.

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I.

THE COMING OF THE QUAKERS.

JOHN ENDICOTT had the heart of a prince. He "came over to governe." He led the sturdy band that conquered from the domain of the forests the first free State of New England. And he "was a fit instrument to begin this wilderness work." From his little ship, "The Abigail," he leaped upon the rocks of Naumkeak, less than eight years after "The Mayflower" anchored in Plymouth Bay. Three or four Englishmen only had ventured before that into the region around Cape Ann. They had fishing and trading posts there, but could hardly be said to have homes. They were, however, jealous of their rights ; and contention quickly kindled against the strangers. But

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the new leader was "loving as well as austere;" and he dealt so gently with this affair that in a little while it issued in joyful peace. It changed the name of that place to Salem. The English residents now numbered about "fiftie or sixtie persons." Vast woods towered around them in lofty and unbroken colonnades. But Endicott was built for a pioneer. His stalwart arm laid low many a monarch of the primeval trees, and his hearty voice cheered on his men as they advanced into the unknown gloom. They cut out roadways, built bridges across the streams, and cleared off the virgin soil, till, in the quaint language of the day, "they began to sett up ploughing."

Early letters were sent to England, where the chartered company still remained; Endicott being the only original patentee who had come to America. The patent of the Company of Massachusetts Bay included all that part of New England stretching from three miles north of the Merrimack to three miles south of the Charles River, and "from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean." "The Planter's Plea," printed in 1630, speaking of these early letters, says, "The good report of Capt. Endicott's government, and the increase of the colony, began to awaken the spirits of some persons not formerly

engaged." They were so "awakened," that, in June of the same year, the whole company with its court and charter transferred itself to the New World. This was "the great arrival," amounting, altogether, to "eleven shipps" and fifteen hundred souls.

Gov. Winthrop, by appointment from England, superseded Gov. Endicott. We do not hear from him one murmur of complaint at the loss of his well-earned honors. He might have pointed to the records of the Court, which testified, that "in consideration of his meritt, worth, and good desert — by errecon of hands," he had been confirmed in his office once and again. He might have recalled those two lone years of wise and valiant toil for which Dr. Bentley says, that, "above all others, he deserves the name of the Father of New England." But not a lisp of this is uttered. The first governor of Massachusetts could obey as well as command; and, through all the administration of his gifted and saintly rival, he was his firm supporter and most sympathizing friend. Winthrop died in 1649; and from that time, until his own death in 1665, Endicott was at the head of affairs. He held the highest office in the Commonwealth for sixteen different years, — a longer period than any other governor under the original charter.



During the more retired portion of his life, he cultivated with great enthusiasm and taste his "Orchard Farm." The farm was situated three miles from Salem Town. It became after a few years the most beautiful spot in America. On three sides, its sunny slopes descended to the waves of the Atlantic. The mansion-house crowned a little eminence near by. That was the home of hospitality and love. By the most diligent inquiry we cannot find that there was ever any discord in the family. As an historical fact, the eldest son John cherished a filial and submissive spirit. He married Elizabeth Howchin, and would have courted only a pretty fancy had he doted on Edith Christison. The lord of our manor dwelt with dignity on his elegant estate. He used to make his journeys to and fro always by water. From the point at which he fastened his shallop, an avenue, overhung with plum-trees and grape-vines, led up to his very door. He was a leader in the agriculture of the colony. One time, he was tardy at the General Court. The excuse he forwarded was this, "He could not come up until the corne be sett." In 1648, he sold to William Trask five hundred apple-trees for two hundred acres of land! In his will, dated 1650, he says, "I give to my



dear and loving wife Elizabeth all my farm called 'Orchard,' and y<sup>e</sup> orchards, nurseries, fruit-trees, gardens, and fences thereunto pertaining." The traces of his labor here have disappeared. But one venerable pear-tree, which he planted with his own hand two hundred years ago, still battles the storms of winter, and greets the gentler gales of summer. It is a monument to his horticultural zeal.

Before Endicott had emigrated to America, he bore the title of captain. He was a soldier to the end of his life. He was early appointed Major-general of the military forces in all the plantation. Those prompt, stern ways which in after-years he carried too far, perhaps, into the civil affairs he administered, were acquired in the midst of arms, and on the perilous edge of battle. One renowned event must not be forgotten. The royal banner used by the colonial troops bore upon its folds the crimson cross of St. George. It was a relic of papal idolatry. The Puritan warrior could not brook it. And one day before they started on an expedition, with his own keen sword he cut it out bodily. This daring act drew upon him the wrath of the king. Says a careful author, "It was the first blow struck in America in defiance of the royalty of England." It would have cost him his

life had it not been for the thunders of rebellion at home, which at that time burst upon the head of Charles the First. All the chief men of the colony agreed in feeling with Endicott; "the only difference being," says Mr. Felt, "that he manifested his opinion in deed, while they retained theirs in secret." The trusty blade with which this memorable deed was done is still preserved as a fine heirloom among his descendants.

Mr. Endicott "was a very virtuous gentleman," are the neat words of the annalist of that day, "and greatly beloved of the most as he well deserved." He was a rigorous magistrate; but, as he venerated justice with his whole soul, he was certainly a good one. "God sifted a whole nation, that he might send choise grain over into this wilderness." Was there a choicer spirit than his? He came to America from the impulse of heartfelt religion. "Whatever may have been the object of others," is the claim of his biographer, "there can be no doubt that *his* was the establishment of a church where he might enjoy Christ and his ordinances in their primitive purity." The poet of the company wrote for him this rare God-speed:—

"Strong, valiant John, wilt thou march on, and take up station first?

Christ called hath thee : his souldier be, and faile not of thy trust."

"Upon the account of religion," says the "Plea," the whole company sought an asylum here, "where they could enjoy the liberty of their own persuasion, without disturbing the peace of the kingdom, and without offence to others not like-minded with themselves." Their hearts glowed with the hope of planting a pure gospel amid the silent groves of America. The first official letters from Matthew Cradock, president of the Company in England, to Endicott, then just "setting his corne," in the little glades of the woods, contained this admonition, "We trust you will not be unmindful of the *main end* of our plantation, by endeavoring to bring the Indians to the knowledge of the gospel." Among the articles voted "to provide to send for New England" are, "Ministers, the Patent under seal, a Seal, Men skilled in making of pitch, of salt," &c. The seal of the colony was an Indian, standing erect, with an arrow in his right hand, encircled with the motto, "Come over and help us." If any of the "salvages" claimed a right to the land, "they were to purchase their tittle, that they might avoid the least scruple of intrusion." The Puritans resorted to every expedient, that, with indefeasible, honor they might make "the holy experiment."

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And ministers were sent, men of renown. A church was formed in Salem, Aug. 6, 1629, — the first church formed in America, the Plymouth church having crossed the ocean ready-made. Mr. Endicott's early pastor and spiritual father, Rev. Mr. Skelton, became "teacher." The company that sailed with Winthrop, after barely touching at Salem, coasted along the curving bay for a more commodious place. They landed on the north bank of Charles River. There they decided to build their homes, where now is the city of Charlestown. By them a second church was constituted July 30, 1630. But, ere long, the beautiful peninsula of Shawmut allured them across the stream. Nearly all moved thither; and there they laid the foundations on which rapidly arose the metropolis of New England. It received the name of Boston, in honor of the distinguished John Cotton, who came from Boston, England. For twenty-one years, John Cotton had been vicar of St. Botolph's Church, one of the most imposing cathedrals of the realm. The lantern of its tower was two hundred and eighty feet above the ground, — a beacon that could be seen by mariners far at sea. In consequence of this fact, St. Botolph was considered the patron saint of sailors. It was said that "the



lamp there ceased to burn when Cotton became a shining light in the wilderness of New England." He exchanged the grandeur of such an edifice for the pulpit of a little building in the woods, thatched with straw, and walled with mud. This original structure stood on State Street, then King Street, where now is the Merchants' Exchange. In 1640, it was replaced by a superior house, built of wood, on the west side of Washington Street, not far south of Court Street, then named Queen Street. This was the church which afterwards resounded with the sermons of John Norton and the outcries of the Quakers.

When Mr. Cotton, "the Nestor of New England," was on his death-bed, his despairing parishioners implored him to name a successor. He fell into a troubled sleep: in it he dreamed that he saw Mr. Norton of Ipswich, riding into Boston on a snow-white horse. His waking thought he was convinced could be no better than that. Mr. Norton was his unfaltering appointment. He was called thereafter, "The falling mantle of the rising prophet." John Norton was a devoted preacher. The maxim of his life was this, "Christ evidently set forth is divine eloquence." Yet he had to contend with a "natural inclination to gayety!" He

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was once addicted to excessive card-playing, but gave it up upon the admonition of a servant in his father's house. When at length he left his county in England, "an ancient man said he believed there was not more grace and excellence in all Essex than what Mr. Norton had carried away." The master of his college wished him to accept a fellowship in Cambridge, and his wealthy uncle desired to buy for him a valuable benefice ; but he declined them both for a simpler worship here. By nature he was a peacemaker. Through his kindly intervention, grave hostilities were prevented, that were likely to pass between "our people and the Dutch at Manhatoes" (Manhattan). At one time there was imminent danger of a break between the civil and religious orders. He preached, at a critical hour, the "Thursday Lecture ;" taking for his theme Ex. iv. 27, where Aaron met Moses in the mount, and kissed him. So clear and persuasive was his proof that there were reciprocal duties to be rendered, that the whole danger vanished at once, and harmony was restored to their councils. He was famed for his scholarship ; and his elegant Latin crossed the ocean again and again, in answer to knotty questions from Dutch and English divines.

"For he a rope of sand could twist  
As tough as learned Sarbonist."

In the "Magnalia" of Cotton Mather, we read that "he had a neater style than most men ; but he desired to furnish himself *ad pugnam*, rather than *ad pompam*." Thomas Shepherd, his life-long friend, contrasted him with the schoolmen to their disadvantage.

"Dull souls their tapers burn exceeding dim :  
They might to school again to learn of him."

He was reckoned by President Styles among the first quaternion of New England, "who were equal to the first characters in theology in all Christendom and in all ages." But, says a modern depic-  
tor, "his tenets surpassed in terror even those of the celebrated Calvin !" His temper was choleric ; and, although it did not make him irascible, it gave a certain impetuosity to his thought, and led him to affirm that there were errors that could only be combated "with the holy tactics of the civil sword." But his most renowned gift was an unrivalled excellence in prayer. His whole soul seemed then to be aglow and aloft. Young divines used to resort to him as an example. So affluent and becoming were the holy thoughts he cherished, that sometimes for an hour together he continued his address to God, without weariness to himself or



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those around him. One aged man from Ipswich used "ordinarily" to come on foot to Boston, a distance of thirty miles, to be present at the Thursday Lecture. He said, "It was worth a great journey to unite in one of Mr. Norton's prayers."

And the influence of such lives as these pervaded the Puritan community. "I have lived," was the testimony of Nathaniel Ward, the author of "The Simple Cobbler of Agawam," "in a colony of many thousand English, almost these twelve years, and am held a very sociable man ; yet I may considerably say I never heard but one oath sworn, nor never saw one man drunk, in all that time." A book bearing the date 1643 affirms, "that one may live there from year to year, and not see a drunkard, or hear an oath, or meet a beggar." "This remarkable private morality," thought Sir James Mackintosh, "is worthy of attention, especially in connection with the creeds they professed." There were, indeed, profane and sottish men, for there were statute laws against them ; no stricter laws, however, than there are to-day, than there ought to be everywhere. Education had already begun to root itself in the soil of fair Harvard. It was fostered by care-taking hands. Industry and trade



also flourished with the vigor of youth. Their dominion over nature widened and improved.

“ Thus to men cast in that heroic mould  
Came empire such as Spaniard never knew,  
Such empire as beseems the just and true ;  
And at the last, almost unsought, came gold.”

This was the happy land, — John Endicott in the chair of state, and John Norton in the leading pulpit, and Christian citizens in every post of duty, — this was the land so soon to shudder beneath the fatal tread of a dreadful mistake.

Religion and laws were closely intertwined in the Puritan community: the government felt itself bound to expatriate every disorderly person, as much as the church was bound to excommunicate him. They were like a household. They had purchased their territory for a home. It was no *El Dorado*: it was their Mount of Sion. With immense toil and unspeakable denials, they had rescued it from the wild woods for the simple purpose that they might have a place for themselves and their children to worship God undisturbed. They knew nothing of toleration. They had not thought of *that*, nor had the thought of it hardly entered the world. Their right to shut the door

against intruders seemed to them as undoubted and absolute as their right to breath the air around them. The coming of the Quakers was to put the validity of this right to a final test. At length it was abandoned; but not until these devoted fields had been the scene of the first tragedy of New England.

The people called Quakers at the present day possess in a high degree the respect of mankind. They are known for the virtues of benevolence and peace. Their little oddities of habit and speech hardly provoke remark. The gentle spirits of Penn and Barclay, the second founders of the sect, seem to have passed into the entire body. They are mild in their deportment, and leaders in every reform. Clarkson and Hopper, Elizabeth Fry and John Bright, are the foremost names in the philanthropic movements of the age. There is one also, dwelling on the banks of the Merrimack, whose calm brow wears a chaplet woven by the shackled hands of all the world. It crowns him also a true laureate of America. He has not yet chosen for the subject of his song the errors of his ancestry. But, although such is their lofty excellence to-day, "seldom," says Palfrey, "have enthusiasts been more coarse, more unfriendly, more wild and annoying, than the early Friends."

There were, however, no excesses that could justify, even should they palliate, the cruelties with which they were received. Cotton Mather said, "If any man will appear in vindication of them, let him do as he pleases ; for my part I will not." It is to be noted that the more severe laws against them were passed with great difficulty, and, soon after the tumult in which they were executed, were regarded with universal regret. But the sole aim of them, we must remember, was to exclude the Quakers, and not to torment them. And says Mr. Bancroft, a great friend of the sect, "Prohibiting the arrival of Quakers was not persecution, and banishment is a term hardly to be used of one who has not acquired a home. When a pauper is sent to his native town, he is not called an exile." Now, the Puritans *disclaimed* the right to sit in judgment on the opinions of others. They denied that they persecuted for conscience' sake. "Non qua erroneos sed qua turbones," was the rule that they proclaimed. They believed that "hereticide was not an evangelical way for extinguishing heresies." Mr. Norton, the exponent of their sterner thoughts, himself asserted that neither Quakers nor others ought to be punished for their consciences ; that the law could take hold only of



their outward acts, and that only when they were subversive of the good order of the land. And brave old Roger Clap, commander of the Boston Castle in 1665, wrote in his diary, concerning the law that expelled Quakers from the jurisdiction on pain of death, "The reason for that law was, because God's people could not worship the true and living God in our public assemblies without being disturbed by them. Some of them presumed to return, to the loss of their lives for breaking that law which was made for our peace and safety."

Such was the plainly-uttered theory of their proceedings. They committed their woful error in the misjudgment of facts. Their fears were overdrawn. They magnified eccentricities into crimes, and regarded what was simply annoying as a solemn danger. In the riot of swift events, their practice often outran their principles; and, in the firm belief that New England was a theocracy, they were not guiltless of the very wrongs from which they had fled.

The first notice of the Quakers in Massachusetts was an order of the General Court of 1656, appointing a "publick day of humiliation to seek the face of God — in behalf of our native country, with



reference to the abounding of errors, especially those of the Ranters and Quakers." Hardly was the day passed when a vessel from Barbadoes, "The Swallow," Simon Kempthorn captain, arrived in "the Road before Boston," with two Quaker women on board, — Ann Austin and Mary Fisher. Officers visited the vessel, and, searching their trunks, found about a hundred Quaker books. The Council thereupon, "tendering the preservation of the peace and truth," did order, —

First, that all such corrupt books be burned in the market-place by the common executioner.

Second, that the said Ann and Mary be kept in close prison until such time as they be transferred out of the country.

Third, that the said Simon Kempthorn is enjoined to transport, or cause to be transported, the said persons from hence to Barbadoes, from whence they came ; and, for the more effectual performance thereof, he is to give security in a bond of one hundred pounds sterling.

While they were in jail, a board was nailed up before the window, that no one might hold communication with them. Nicholas Upsall, an aged citizen, was deeply interested in their behalf, and purchased food for them every week, "lest they

should be starved." After five weeks' confinement, they re-embarked for Barbadoes.

The maiden Mary continued her romantic travels. "Being moved of the Lord" to deliver a message to the Sultan of Turkey, she entered upon a journey towards the Sublime Porte. She toiled along by land from the coasts of Morea to the city of Adrianople. This part of her journey, about six hundred miles, she made alone, "without abuse or injury." At Adrianople, she found the grand vizier encamped with all his army. She discovered means of announcing her arrival, which was done in these words: "An English woman hath a message from the great God to the great Turk." She was soon invited to his tent, and with the aid of three interpreters "uttered her mind." He listened "with much gravity and soberness," and offered her a guard for her further progress. She declined it, and departed for Constantinople alone, "whitherto she came without the least hurt or scoff." In George Bishope's book, which was published in 1661, with the title, "New England judged by the Spirit of the Lord," Mary was said to fare better among the heathens than among the Christians, "to the glory of the great Turk, and his great renown, and your everlasting shame and

contempt!" The Orientals regarded lunatics as inspired: therefore they overwhelmed the Quakers with prodigious quantities of genuflections and salams. They bowed them out of the country, never to be troubled by them again.

No sooner had these two unwelcome visitors departed than another vessel, sailing from London, brought eight more Quakers to our inhospitable shore. Their treatment was similar to that of the first party. After eleven weeks of suffering in the jail, they embarked again "for no place but England." Their behavior was said to be "uncivil." Mary Prince shouted out a malediction upon the governor as he was going by the prison from his place of worship: she also wrote him a letter "filled with opprobrious stuff." The governor sent for her to come to his own house. He had invited two ministers to be present, and, "with much tenderness," they endeavored to induce her to desist from her extravagances. To this exhortation she returned the grossest reproaches, calling them "hirelings, deceivers of the people, Baal's priests, the seed of the serpent," &c. Such, it appears, was their usual style of addressing all rulers in State and Church.

Thus far, action against the Quakers had pro-



ceeded upon the general law against heresy. The emergency seemed to require some special legislation. The Federal Commissioners at their annual meeting, Sept. 17, 1656, recommended such legislation to the four United Colonies. The General Court of Massachusetts promptly acted in the matter. On the 14th of October, the first law was passed against the Quakers. They are called "a cursed sect, who take upon them to speak and write blasphemous opinions, despising governments, reviling magistrates and ministers, and seeking to turn the people to their pernicious ways." The law forbade "the master of any ship, bark, pink, or catch," to bring Quakers "into any harbour, creek, or cove of the jurisdiction," upon pain of a hundred pounds' fine. It prohibited the Quakers themselves from coming on pain of immediate imprisonment and severe castigation. Such was the excitement into which the government had been thrown by the events of the summer, that this law was published in the market-place, and through the streets of Boston, by beat of the drum. When it was proclaimed at the door of Nicholas Upsall, "the good old man," says Joseph Besse in his "Sufferings of the Quakers," published in 1753, "grieved in spirit, publically testified against it,"



demanding "that they take heed what they did, lest they be found fighters against God." This was considered seditious language; and poor Upsall, who had before been excommunicated from the Church, was now fined twenty pounds, and ordered to leave the country within a month. His fine was partly abated at the request of his wife, and he was permitted to stay in Sandwich until the rigor of winter was passed. He then was welcomed "to a warm house" by an Indian prince in Rhode Island. In three years, he returned from his exile, and, refusing to retract his offensive speeches, he was again remanded to the Boston prison. After being there two years, "he drew so many persons to him," that he was transferred to the Castle. Soon, however, permission was granted him to dwell with his brother in Dorchester, "provided he do not corrupt any with his pernicious opinions." This was the end of his sad persecutions, and here he ended his stormy life in an eventide of comparative peace.

But the new law was not to be a dead letter. The next year, 1657, Mary Clark left her husband and six children in London, and sailed across the Atlantic, "that she might warn these persecutors to desist from their iniquity." She delivers her mes-

sage, is scourged, and committed to prison for twelve weeks. She is then sent away. Christopher Holder, one of the eight who had been reshipped to England, appeared again in Salem, and "spoke a few words in meeting after the priest had done." This "speaking a few words in meeting" we shall find hereafter, was a most startling disturbance to the solemn Puritans. George Fox, previous to this, when a Rev. doctor had preached upon the theme, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye, buy without money and without price," was "moved of the Lord" to cry out, "Come down, thou deceiver: dost thou bid people to come to the waters of life freely, and yet thou takest three hundred pounds a year of them?" In the Salem church, Holder was "haled back by the hair of his head, and his mouth violently stopped with a glove and handkerchief thrust thereinto." The next day he was "had to Boston." He received thirty stripes, and the jailer's custody for nine weeks. He continued to disturb public worship in various places, suffering repeated imprisonments, and at length the loss of his right ear.

The law of 1656 checked the influx of Quakers, but did not stop it entirely. It was amended Oct. 14, 1657, to this effect: "Every one who know-

ingly entertained a Quaker should pay forty shillings for each hour of hospitality. Quaker men, if they returned after the first expulsion, should have one ear cut off; if they returned again, they should lose the other. Quaker women, in each case, were to be severely whipped; and for every Quaker, he or she, that should a third time herein again offend, they should have their tongues thrust through with a hot iron." The first of these mutilations was inflicted in three instances only, the others not at all.

The populace murmured against such inhumanities. They were thrown into a tumult of rebellion when the story of a strange outrage burst forth from the prison-walls. One William Brend, said "to be of a turbulent spirit, and forward to abuse men with his tongue," had addressed this communication to the magistrates: "The Lord of this Campe, whom y<sup>e</sup> world derides, persecutes, and in scorne calls Quakers, will by them dash y<sup>e</sup> nations to pieces; therefore repent—for opposing y<sup>e</sup> Lord in any of his servants by fines, imprisonments, and banishments. This is a message sent from y<sup>e</sup> most high God of heaven and earth into New England; though you will not believe it, you shall know it." This poor enthusiast, according to



Quaker authorities, endured terrific abuses from the "inhumane gaoler." Though "a man in years, he put him in irons, neck and heels so close together that there was no more room left between each than for the lock that fastened them." Thus he kept him from five in the morning till after nine at night, "being the space of sixteen hours." The next morning, he brought him to the mill to work. Brend refused, "having been kept five days without eating, and unmercifully beaten with a rope." Then the "butcherly fellow" "began to beat anew, and laid fourscore and seventeen more blows on him;" so that his back and arms were bruised and black. "His whole flesh had become a jelly," and "his senses were stopped." He would have died, "had it not pleased God miraculously to heal him." The noise of such brutality flew through the town. The governor sent his own surgeon to the prison to afford what aid he could; and the magistrates — for they feared a mutiny — "set up a paper on the meeting-house door, and up and down the streets," declaring their abhorrence of the outrage, and promising to punish the jailer. "But," says Besse, "this paper was soon taken down at the instigation of the high priest, John Norton, who did not stick to say, 'William Brend



endeavoured to beat our gospel ordinances black and blue ; if *he* then be beaten black and blue, it is but just upon him ; and I will appear in his behalf that did so.' ”

Under the presidency of Endicott, the Federal commissioners met again in Boston, in 1658. It was this session which propounded to the several courts their most sanguinary laws. When the court of Massachusetts met, a memorial was presented by twenty-four citizens, praying for the legislation they proposed. They quoted the example of other Christian states ; referred to the ineffectual remedies hitherto employed ; announced the principle of *se defendendo* ; and, finally, put the question, “whether it be not necessary,” if Quakers continue to obtrude themselves, “to punish so high incorrigibleness in such and so many capital evils with death.”

The provision of a threat of death against banished persons had been the resort of Massachusetts through a long course of years. It had heretofore never once failed of its object. “There can be no doubt,” says Palfrey, “that among those who favored this new enactment, there was a confident persuasion that the terror of the law would accomplish all that was desired, and would pre-

vent any occasion for its execution." — "The object of this severity," says Bancroft, "was not to persecute, but to exclude them."

On the 20th of October, their most extreme measure was adopted. Thenceforward, persons convicted by special jury of belonging to "the pernicious sect of Quakers should be sentenced to banishment, on pain of death."

The House which passed this implacable act consisted of twenty-five members. When it was first put to vote, it was promptly rejected. Upon a motion to reconsider, a long and excited debate ensued. At length, it was carried in the affirmative, by a vote of thirteen to twelve. One voice was wanting to avert the calamity. This fact so troubled good Deacon Wozel, who was absent because of illness, that "he got to the court weeping for grief," and said, "If he had not been able to go [walk], he would have crept upon his knees rather than such a law should pass."

The government had crossed the Rubicon. It had taken a position which it could not abandon without humiliation, or maintain without cruelty. The court seemed in some degree sensible of the import of their act. In deference to the public sentiment opposing them, they voted that a paper be

composed and printed "to manifest the evil of the tenets of the Quakers, and the danger of their practices." This business was assigned to "John Norton, Teacher, of Boston." It was published at the public charge, and bore the title, "The Heart of New England Rent at the Blasphemies of the Present Generation; or, A brief Tractate concerning the Doctrine of the Quakers," — "which doctrine," says Cotton Mather, "was in this tract solidly confuted; and perhaps it had been better if this had been all the confutation, which I add because I will not — I cannot — make myself a vindicator of the severities that followed."

But desperate souls were abroad, men who looked upon this menace as an invitation, and sprang forward at once to avail themselves of the chance of martyrdom. Marmaduke Stevenson, a young man then in Barbadoes, heard of the "bloody law," and took passage immediately for New England. He reached Rhode Island, and found there his friend, William Robinson, to whom, in the language of a letter from the cell in which he lay condemned to die, "the word of the Lord had come expressly, and commanded me to pass to the town of Boston, my life to lay down." — "After a little time," as a similar letter asserted, "the word of the



Lord came to Marmaduke also, saying, 'Go to Boston with thy brother, William Robinson.' The two accordingly went. Mary Dyer, "a comely, grave woman, the mother of several children," likewise was "moved of the Lord to come from Rhode Island to make them a visit." Nicholas Davis also was one of the party. A delicate little girl, only eleven years old, thrilled with the fine enthusiasm, came all the way "from her father's house in Providence to bear witness against your persecuting spirit." The court decided that she was too young for trial ; and a sturdy, kind-hearted judge agreed to carry her safely home. The four others were arrested, and straightway banished, on pain of death. Nicholas and Mary "found freedom to depart ;" but the other two were "constrained in the love and power of the Lord to try your bloody law unto death." They hovered about Salem a few weeks, and then, in the midst of quite a troop of Friends, marched into Boston with unfaltering steps. They reversed the precept of the Master, "When they shall persecute you in one city, flee ye into another." They certainly courted the fatal event. Alice Cowland, one who came with them, brought some "linnen," as she showed the governor, "wherein to wrap the dead bodies



of them who were to suffer." Mary Dyer reconsidered her duty, and was also "soon espied" in Boston.

Here, then, were three heroic fanatics, who had committed a mortal offence. It was done with the clear intention of defying a statute-law. What ought to be the course of the makers of that law, when driven to such an extremity? Drop it at once, we say; cast off your rash enactment; forbid the suicide; let no judgment convert a mad-cap into a martyr's crown. Possibly the invaders expected this victory in the final encounter. Better, far better, that they had obtained it, than that one life should be lost in a mere contest of excited wills!

But those iron men with whom they dealt knew not how to bend. The government felt that it could not yield. John Endicott said to them in the open court, "We have made many laws to keep you from amongst us. I do not desire your death." He briefly reverted to the danger they brought to their peace-loving State, and then, "speaking faintly," says Bishope, "as a man whose life was departing from him," pronounced the sentence, "You shall be had back to the place from whence you came, and from thence to the place of execu-

tion, to be hanged on the gallows till you are dead."

The 27th of October, 1659, is a dark day in the calendar of New England. As the afternoon began to decline, these three persons, "led by the back way," because they "were afraid of the fore way, lest it should affect the people too much;" guarded by a band of two hundred men, armed with halberds, and by a troop of horse, with drums beating to drown whatever they might say; "walking hand in hand, Mary being the middlemost," — took up their solemn march to the gallows. It stood upon Boston Common, perhaps beneath the Great Elm. The two men, one after the other, climbed the ladder, and were hanged. They died with exalted hearts. The last words of Robinson were, "I suffer for Christ, in whom I live, and for whom I die." Stevenson said, "This day shall we be at rest with the Lord." Mary Dyer then stepped up the ladder. The halter was put about her neck; her face was covered with a handkerchief; she was just to be turned off, — when a faint cry arrested the hangman's act. It was this: "Stop! stop! she is reprieved!" "A reprieve! a reprieve!" was shouted back and forth by a hundred willing voices. The execution immediately stopped. But she,

whose mind was already, as it were, in heaven, stood still, and said, "she was there willing to suffer as her brethren did, unless they would annul their wicked law." Could there be a deeper pathos than that? Her own son, who was secretary of state in Rhode Island, had come to Boston to intercede in her behalf. The magistrates could not refuse him; and he bore his dauntless mother back to their home.

At this point, the resentment and compassion of the people overleaped all restraint, and burst out in ominous threats. The court, still sitting, felt compelled to justify their action. Two declarations were drawn up, — one to be printed, and the other to be sent to the several towns. They are preserved in the Massachusetts Records. They plead the cause of the judges in these words: "Altho' the justice of our proceedings against William Robinson, Marmaduke Stevenson, and Mary Dyer, supported by the authority of this court, and the laws of the country, and the laws of God; may rather persuade us to expect encouragement and commendation from all prudent and pious men, than convince us of any necessity to apologize for the same, yet, forasmuch as men of weaker parts, out of pity and commiseration (a commendable



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and Christian virtue, yet easily abused, and susceptible of sinister and dangerous impressions), for want of full information, may be less satisfied, and men of perverse principles may take occasion hereby to calumniate us, and render us bloody persecutors, — to satisfy the one, and stop the mouth of the other, we thought it requisite to declare, that, about three years since, divers persons professing themselves to be Quakers . . . arrived in Boston, whose persons were only secured to be sent away by the first opportunity without censure or punishment, although their design was to undermine and ruin . . . the peace and order here established. Accordingly, a law was made prohibiting Quakers from coming into this jurisdiction on penalty of the house of correction till they be sent away. Notwithstanding which, by a back door, they found entrance; . . . the penalty was therefore increased: which also being too weak a defence against their impetuous and fanatic fury, a law was made, that such persons should be banished on pain of death, according to the example of England in their provision against Jesuits. . . . The consideration of our gradual proceedings will vindicate us from the clamorous accusation of severity, our own just and necessary defence calling upon us (other



measures failing) to offer the points which these persons have violently and wilfully rushed upon, and thereby are become *felons de se*, which might have been prevented, and the sovereign law, *salus populi*, been preserved. Our former proceedings, as well as the sparing of Mary Dyer upon an inconsiderable intercession, will manifestly evince that we desire their *life absent* rather than their *death present*."

The second document also reviews their legislation, and then presents the following reasons for insisting upon the extreme penalty :—

1st. The doctrine of the sect destroys the fundamental truths of religion.

2d. They renounce openly the command of God to obey magistrates.

3d. If death may be lawfully exacted for breach of confinement, it certainly may for breach of banishment.

4th. As a householder may repel an intruder with the sword, so may a government.

5th. A parent defends his family against a pestiferous visitor : thus should rulers defend their subjects against moral contagion.

6th. This is not the persecution of Christians ; for Christians, when persecuted in one city, flee into another.

This twofold plea went forth to the people. It was thoughtfully drawn, and indicated truly that the court was not impelled alone by either eyeless bigotry or mad vexation. Probably it convinced some of the disaffected: no doubt it was thoroughly believed by the upright men who proclaimed it. Authorities in jurisprudence of the present day have testified that "they had upon their side that sort of rigid justice which proceeds upon the established rule that a *perfect right* may be maintained at *any cost* to the invader." But, in answer to such a proposition, our hearts affirm that life is too precious a thing to be trampled upon by the heel of meagre consistency, and humanity ought never to be surrendered to a principle of logic. Defeat in such conditions would have been more noble than success.

In the mellowed light of history, with reference to this entire contention, we can all see the truthfulness of those ancient verses of the "Simple Cobbler of Agawam:"—

"They seldom lose the field, but often win,  
That end their wars before their wars begin."

Mary Dyer could not be at rest. The next spring "she was moved to return to the bloody town of Bos-

ton." Her husband wrote beseechingly to Endicott, that he had not seen her above this half-year ; that she had journeyed secretly and speedily all about, and at length had come to Boston. "Unhappy journey, may I say, and woe to that generation that help one another to hazard their lives, for I know not what end, and to what purpose !"

Endicott was loath to condemn her. He even crossed his nature enough to suggest to her the evasion of denying her identity. There had been another Mrs. Dyer in the Province. But she would not equivocate. With wonderful heroism she marched to her fate. When her sentence was pronounced upon her, she replied, "I came in obedience to the will of God ; the last General Court desiring you to repeal your unrighteous laws, and that same is my work now, and earnest request." On the morning of the next day, she was led forth a second time to the place of execution. They were anxious to save her. Even at the gallows they delayed the execution ; and her life was offered her again and again, if she would only promise to leave the jurisdiction. "Nay, I cannot," was her constant reply ; for "in obedience to the will of the Lord I came, and in his will I abide faithful to death."



There was but one more victim of this direful enactment. A resident of Barbadoes, named William Leddra, after repeated disturbances in Salem and Newbury, and corresponding chastisements, upon his third return in 1661 was brought to trial and doomed to the gallows. He was charged him with contempt for authorities, because he refused to remove his hat, and for saying "thee" and "thou." His reply was, "Will you put me to death for speaking good English, and for not putting off my clothes?" — "A man may speak treason in good English," was the sharp response. "Will you return to England?" they demanded. "I have no business there," he said. Simon Bradstreet pointed a menacing finger to the scaffold, saying, "Then you shall go there." — "Will you put me to death for breathing the air of your jurisdiction? I appeal to the laws of England." Says Mr. Chandler in his "American Criminal Trials," "Twenty years before it had been accounted perjury and treason to speak of appeals to the king." Yet, after this, he was offered his life if he would promise to leave the Province. Still refusing, he was consigned to his fate. He wrote to his friends from his prison-cell, the day before his death, a letter full of pure and charming sentiment. "The sweet



influences of the morning star, distilling into my innocent habitation, have so filled me with the joy of the Lord, in the beauty of holiness, that my spirit is as if it did not inhabit a tabernacle of clay, but is wholly swallowed up in the bosom of eternity." He took tender leave of his fellow-captives, and went to the gallows in a gentle and saintly way. A stranger in the crowd, just arrived by sea, was smitten with overwhelming pity. He cried out, "For God's sake, take not away the man's life, but remember Gamaliel's counsel to the Jews." The captain of the guard bade him hold his peace, and he departed in tears. "All that will be Christ's disciples must take up the cross," Leddra murmured at the foot of the ladder. His last words were the prayer of lofty resignation, — "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

At the height of Leddra's trial, Wenlock Christison, another of the banished, suddenly strode into the court, and took his stand by the side of the prisoner. His appearance sent dismay into the minds of the judges. He confronted them with wild and dreadful words. "Are not you the man who was banished on pain of death?" demanded Endicott, in a troubled voice. "Yea, I am," was the deep-toned reply. "What dost thou

here, then?" he said. "I come to warn you that you shed no more innocent blood; for the blood that you have shed cries to the Lord God for vengeance to come upon you." Endicott was weary enough of that bloody work; and here was another victim madly rushing to the altar. Christison had suffered much before this for his obstinate turbulence. It was thought that at length he had been effectually dismissed. They committed him once again.

After three months, when he was brought to trial, a great change had come over the court. At the beginning of that period, they would have passed sentence upon him at once, without disagreement: now they contested the point for more than two weeks. The governor was vexed at what he thought their lack of nerve. Hurling something violently upon the table, he said, "I could find it in my heart to go home [to England]; I thank God I am not afraid to give judgment." Would that he had been afraid! The metal of his nature was the stuff of which martyrs are made: it was not tempered enough for a martyr's judge.

A majority was at length obtained for the condemnation, "provided, nevertheless, that if the said Christison shall at any time before the execution,

by writing under his hand, engage that he forthwith depart this jurisdiction, and from thenceforth return no more into it, without having first obtained leave from the General Court or Council, he shall thereupon be discharged." In the Massachusetts Archives may be found this letter :—

I the condemned man doe give forth under my hand that if I may have my libarty, I have freedome to depart this Jurisdiction, and I know not y<sup>t</sup> ever I shall com into it any more.

WINLOCK CHRISTISON.

from y<sup>e</sup> goal in Boston,  
y<sup>e</sup> 7th day of y<sup>e</sup> 4th mo. 1661.

But there were signs that the fury of the conflict was nearly spent, that the wild tide of fanaticism had begun to turn. Strong wills had been pitted against each other in a desperate encounter. The Quaker had conquered. His gallant fortitude could not be overawed. The chief men of Boston saw, with astonishment and horror, the dreaded sect increase just in proportion to the number and severity of the laws against them. Said Christison at his trial, "There came five in place of the last man you executed." The authorities were wholly disarmed when even the threat of death, instead of a weapon to repel, proved a magnet to draw them.



With such indomitable audacity they had no power to cope.

When the court assembled on the 22d of May, the Quakers had assumed the offensive. In the diary of a private citizen, under this date may be found this significant entry: "The Quakers have given out such speeches as gave cause to think they intended mischief unto our magistrates and ministers, and threatened fire and sword to be our speedy portion!"

The feeling of compassion also, which all along had muttered among the people its growing dissent, now rose in overpowering rebukes. These voices could not be longer braved. This court, therefore, persuaded by such means, though it could not bring itself at once to a full repeal of its law for capital punishment, enacted an amendment which it well knew would supersede its execution. "Being desirous to try all means, with as much lenity as may consist with our safety, to prevent the intrusion of the Quakers, who, besides absurd and blasphemous doctrines, like rogues and vagabonds come among us" [thus shifting their ground of legislation from that of heresy to that of vagrancy], "the Court has ordered that every such vagabond Quaker," adjudged to be "one that hath not any dwelling or



orderly allowance as an inhabitant of this jurisdiction, shall be stripped naked from the middle upwards, and tied to a cart's tail, and whipped through the town,"—and so on "till they be conveyed through any of the outmost towns of our Jurisdiction." Should they return after being three times thus dealt with, they shall be branded with the letter R on their left shoulder, whipped, and sent away again; "and," it is added in compliment to their dishonored past, should they return yet again, they are to be made amenable to "the law made anno 1658 for their banishment on pain of death."

No hanging or branding ever took place in consequence of this legislation.

It has been commonly maintained that a mandate from Charles II. put a stop to the ill treatment of Quakers in New England, and that his royal intervention alone saved them from utter destruction. This opinion Mr. Palfrey confutes. Several months before his gracious order crossed the sea, our harsher laws had been mollified, and the resolution fully taken to put no more of them to death. The proud magistrates, however, were quite willing to have the king's injunction generally regarded as the *motive* for the new indulgences rather than any change of judgment on their part. They were more

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stiff than cruel; and it was easier to bow to the sovereignty of Charles than bend to the confession of a mistake. And in one view the royal will just accorded with their own: it removed the very men they were most anxious to be rid of. No doubt it hastened, and also widened, the returning tide of good feeling.

Four months before it came, under the new law all the Quakers in prison, twenty-seven in number, were released, and sent out of the jurisdiction without punishment. Many of these had come into Boston clad in sackcloth and ashes, pronouncing tremendous woes upon the bloody city.

As the clemency of the rulers began its gentler sway, for a time at least the vehemence of the disturbers seemed to increase. Their antics became even more grotesque than before. George Wilson, one of those first released, paced slowly through the streets of Boston, crying with a loud voice, "The Lord is coming forth with fire and sword to plead with this city." Elizabeth Hooton, an aged English woman, who had been severely whipped three or four times, delivered a similar message in the streets of Cambridge.

But their favorite place of denouncing was "the steeple-house;" and their favorite victim was

"the man-made minister." The early Puritans had a sacred love for their public worship, and a peculiar reverence for the preacher of righteousness. Imagine the horror occasioned by such a scene as this. Four women arrive from Barbadoes on the Lord's day. Mary Brewster is their leader. She hurries with them to the door of the South Church. There, casting off her shoes and riding-suit, with hair dishevelled and streaming over her shoulder, in a long robe of sackcloth whose ragged edge frets her bare feet, with her face begrimed with grease and lampblack, she rushes into the midst of the silent congregation, and, in a quaking voice, announces herself as "a Sign of the Black Pox," which was soon to appear in judgment upon them! She afterwards confessed, that, three years before, this service was laid upon her of the Lord, and that her husband was willing for her to perform it! Simon Bradstreet, in his warrant, calls their offence "the making an horrible disturbance on the Lord's day, and affrighting the people of the South Church in Boston in the time of the publick dispensation of the word." The constable could not identify her when she was brought before the court; for he says, "She was then in the shape of the Devil." Owing herself to be the culprit, however,



she was whipped "up and down the town with twenty lashes."

During another service, Thomas Newhouse stalked into the broad aisle of the church with two great glass bottles in his hands, and, gloomily turning about, in the face of the whole congregation broke them one against the other, proclaiming in a prophetic manner, "Thus will the Lord break you in pieces."

Lydia Wardell, "being a young and tender and chaste woman," in obedience to the inward light, as a sign of the spiritual nakedness of her neighbors, with the encouragement of her husband, "though it was exceeding hard to her modest and shame-faced disposition," went into the crowded church without a shred of clothing upon her. Deborah Wilson, "a young woman of very modest and retired life, and of sober conversation, as were her parents," was constrained "to go through the town of Salem" in a similar plight, "as a sign."

The Quaker author, Besse, though writing many years after the excitement of the day, approves these displays, and applauds the poor dupes who made them. Is it strange, however, that the guardians of public morals should seek to repress them, even by the whips of justice? It is related by Gra-



hame, that one man, named Faubord, undertaking to imitate Abraham, was really about to offer up his son as a sacrifice ; his neighbors, hearing the cries of the lad, broke into his house just in time to prevent the blasphemous atrocity.

But in general, it must be allowed, the absurdity of their behavior was harmless. They were pure and lovable in their private lives ; and their public pranks even were free from guile. There was an "inward light." It shed its gentle radiance over acts that would be otherwise dark indeed. It did not cease to shine all through their lurid sufferings. George Fox had converted his pillory into a pulpit ; and he made so many converts of the gaping crowd that gathered round it, that they liberated him "in a tumultuous manner," and set a clergyman, who had been instrumental in his punishment, in the very position he had occupied. And so *they* preached in the court and the prison, at the cart's tail, and even on the ladder of death. Day and night an increasing throng gathered about their places of punishment. The Puritans ought to have learned before this that persecution was one of the surest means to propagate a religious persuasion.

The number of sufferers during the whole period of these severities was comparatively small : it was

only about thirty. An address to the king, from the pen of a Quaker, before it was entirely ended, gave this summary: "Twenty-two have been banished upon pain of death, three have been martyred, three have had their right ears cut, one hath been burned in the hand with the letter H, thirty-one persons have received six hundred and fifty stripes, . . . one thousand and forty-four pounds worth of goods have been taken from them, and one now lieth in fetters, condemned to die." Edward Burrough, who probably wrote this address, at length obtained access to the royal ear. He spoke to his Majesty thus: "There is a vein of innocent blood opened in your dominions, which, if not stopped, may overrun all." Whereupon the king said, "I will stop that vein;" "not liking," as a student of his character has affirmed, the "annoyance of refusing a request."

A *mandamus* was at once prepared in these words: —

CHARLES R.

Trusty and well beloved, we greet you well. Having been informed that several of our subjects amongst you, called Quakers, have been and are imprisoned by you, whereof some have been executed, and others (as hath been represented unto us) are in danger to undergo the like: We have thought fit to signify our pleasure in that behalf for the future, and do

hereby require, that if there be any of those people now amongst you, now already condemned to suffer death or other corporal punishment, or that are imprisoned, and obnoxious to the like condemnation, you are to forbear to proceed any further therein, but that you forthwith send the said persons, whether condemned or imprisoned, over into this Our Kingdom of England, together with the respective crimes or offenses laid to their charge, to the end such course may be taken with them here as shall be agreeable to our laws and their demerits ; and for so doing these our letters shall be your sufficient warrant and discharge.

Given at Our Court at Whitehall the ninth day of Sept., 1661, in the thirteenth year of Our Reign.

To Our trusty and well-beloved John Endicott, Esquire,  
&c.

By his Majesty's Command,

WILLIAM MORRIS.

Samuel Shattock, who had formerly been banished from Salem, was commissioned to convey this rescript to the Colony. A ship was at once chartered by a subscription among the Friends ; and Ralph Goldsmith, also a Friend, sailed as captain. After a voyage of six weeks, they arrived in Boston harbor. It was Sabbath day. Several citizens, seeing the English colors flying from the mast, at once came aboard, and inquired if they had any letters from England. "No, not to-day," replied Goldsmith, keeping close about the errand of de-



liverance on which he came. Capt. Oliver, who had commanded the city forces during the excitement of the executions, was one of the visitors. "Supposing," says Bishope, "they were most Quakers, he came into Boston, and said, as is reported, 'There is Shattock, and the Devil and all!'"

The next morning, Capt. Goldsmith, with Samuel Shattock, the king's deputy, went on shore; and they two went directly through the town to the governor's house, on Pemberton Square, whither he had removed his official residence at the request of the court, "out of respect to strangers." They knocked at the door. He sent out a servant to know their business. They replied that their message was from the king of England, and they would deliver it to none but himself. "Then they were admitted to go in; and the governor came to them, and commanded Samuel Shattock's hat to be taken off. Having received the deputy and the *mandamus*, he laid off his own hat, ordering Shattock's hat to be given him again. He then went out into the street, and bade the two Friends follow him." After finding Deputy-Governor Bellingham, and consulting with him, he came back, and uttered the laconic speech, "We shall obey his Majesty's command!"

This utterance was decisive ; and the joyful officers hastened back to the vessel, and gave liberty to the waiting passengers to come ashore. " Out must the Quakers be put of the prisons ;" and that night " they all met together, and offered up praises to God for this wonderful deliverance."

Thus terminated, on the 25th of November, 1661, the sufferings of the Quakers in America. Later than this, there were instances of extravagance on the one hand, and violence on the other. The court, in a moment of anger, at one time revived and re-affirmed the statute-law against them ; but the penalties were more lightly inflicted, and soon altogether ceased. Several of the odd gambols described above happened after the pressure of persecution was removed. Ere long, however, they had also ceased. In a few years, William Penn, whose courtly grace had already named him "The Quaker King," leaving the gaud and glory of a palace came to the banks of the Delaware, and erected a sylvan throne in the groves of the West. The effulgence of his example threw a milder coloring over Quaker customs throughout the world.

" It is a hard measure," says a learned barrister, " to visit upon the colonists of New England the

sins of all Christendom." Intolerance was the mistake of the age. Every nation into which the Quaker came persecuted him with peculiar rigor. Of all new sects, the first appearance of this one was most offensive. Its attitude seemed insolent and dangerous. The Quaker denounced the existing worship as an abomination, and government everywhere as treason. Even Roger Williams, "The Apostle of Liberty," contended that there were bounds of civil order that must be preserved, and that the Quakers had certainly transgressed them. The Governor of Rhode Island, which was the "backe door" of their entrance to Massachusetts, admitted "that their doctrines tend to very absolute cutting down and overturning relations and civil government among men." He could not fight; he could not swear; he could not pay tithes.

"Region, estate, rule civil and divine,  
Religion, — all they seek to undermine."

This was the feeling of affrighted men. Instead of the broad-brimmed and opulent gentleman, whose mild deportment calms and delights us in the feverish excitement of to-day, the vision then was a wild and dreamy-eyed fanatic, running up and down the earth propagating fatuitous doctrine,



and vilifying the most respected men. Taken with "mighty convincements," they invaded the Vatican of the Pope, as well as the Kremlin of the Czar. They had "drawings" to the Moors and the Tartars, and even to the Emperor of China. And their idea of missions was as grotesque as their journeys were romantic. A mission was not the sober inculcation of truth: it was a thunder-clap of execration. They would "deliver," and then depart. Such performances in our day would have opened to them the door of asylums, rather than shut upon them the door of jails. "They were," says Mather, "madmen, — a sort of lunatics, dæmoniacks, and enurgumens."

Now, the Puritans knew no better how to treat them than other men. It certainly can be shown that they did treat them no *worse*.

Besse gives the *names* of more than ten hundred Quakers who suffered imprisonment, torture, scourging, or transportation in England, and the *names* of almost two hundred whose sufferings there ended in death. Does such a stupendous fact make it becoming for the mother country to lay upon her daughter the charge of special cruelty? By an Act of Parliament as late as 1662, Quakers were subjected to a heavy fine for holding their meetings,

and, for a third offence, were to be transported to a distant colony. In consequence of this law, whole ship-loads were carried into exile. And the mob of England, — the very reverse of what was true in America, — in spite against the Quakers, used to hound on the magistrate, and redouble the punishment. In one case, the house in which they had met was torn down over their heads. They gathered upon the ruins : they could not be dispersed by armed men. And there, huddled close together on that woful pile, the rabble seized shovels to throw the rubbish over them. They were almost buried alive before they were driven off.

And shall we speak approvingly, even in contrast with our acknowledged fault, of the toleration of a government that adopted an Act of Parliament, July 1, 1664, demanding that *all* above sixteen years of age who should meet for purposes of worship contrary to the established form should be fined or imprisoned, and, for the third offence, should be banished seven years, or pay one hundred pounds, and, if they returned without leave, they should suffer death ? Is there any thing darker than this upon the statute-books of Massachusetts ?

The clamors against the Puritans on the score of persecution are a modern excitement. They

*are* to be blamed for it ; but why blamed more than others ? Is it because their virtues are so surpassing ? Among the Chevaliers of Virginia, a law was enacted in terms almost identical with our most reprobated statute. Quakers should be subjected to close confinement until they should abjure their country ; and, for a third return, they were to suffer death.

In evidence that the court at Whitehall did not at heart condemn our severities, we find a message from Charles II. to this colony, dated nearly a year after the celebrated *mandamus*. It contained these words : "Wee cannot be understood hereby to direct or wish that any indulgence should be granted to those persons commonly called Quakers, whose principles being inconsistent with any kind of government ; wee have found it necessary to make a sharp law against them, and are well content you shall do the like there." These "sharp laws," as well as the simultaneous arrests in Holland, Russia, the islands of the Mediterranean, and the coasts of Algeria, all belonged to one great error, that belted the globe. Which misguided people is to cast stones at the rest ? or is one alone to be selected for the assaults of all ?

The peculiar character of the New-England



Plantation, instead of aggravating their crime, in truth is a real palliation of it. They came into the wilderness for the sole purpose of enjoying *their* religion without hurt or interference. The government was constructed with this object in view. "The Heart of New England Rent" refers to this fact as the very reason for its rigor. "The profession of the purity of doctrine, worship, and discipline is written upon the forehead of New England." They sought no proselytes ; and they did not endeavor to enforce their views beyond their own jurisdiction. "And now," says Mather, "if the Quakers themselves had got into a corner of the world, and with immense toyl and charge made a wilderness habitable on purpose to be undisturbed in the exercise of their worship, they would never bear to have New Englanders come among *them* and interrupt their publick worship and endeavour to seduce their children from it." The stern dealings of the State of Pennsylvania with some unpleasant intruders at the period in which he wrote seemed to justify this assumption. Beyond all question, a government has a right to thrust out those who interfere with the very object for which it was erected. The United States can suppress the Mormons. It was the evil practice of the age to proceed still

further, and attempt to control the opinions of men.

But religion, their loved religion, was the object of the first communities in America. With it the wounds of the outcasts were healed, and the tears of their exile were sweetened. "New England was the colony of Conscience." Every thing was brought to the test of the higher law. Now here were strange men who renounced, as they thought, the authority of the Bible; who denied the sanctity of the Sabbath; who called their holy ministry the "seed of the serpent," and their dignified rulers "monsters of iniquity;" who alleged that an "inward light," which seemed from their conduct to be a mere *ignis fatuus*, was the supreme guide of every soul. It is difficult to say *what* should be done with such a people. Certainly they ought not to be slain. But is it a wonder, that, as the court itself affirmed, "after all other means had failed to check their impetuous and desperate turbulency, the magistrates judged themselves called, for the defence of all, to *keep the passage with the point of the sword held towards them*"? Their wilfully rushing upon it was their own act.

The Quakers, although they despised the sword, were mighty with the pen. They have kept their suf-

ferings before the world. An almanac, prepared by one of them for the year 1694, has this item of chronology : " Since the English in New England hanged their countrymen for religion, — years 36." Their memory was relentless ; but we are glad to acknowledge that their hearts were quick to forgive us. There is beautiful evidence of this in a recent issue of the Massachusetts Historical Society. It was found in the diary of Increase Mather for the year 1676, a period of great distress to the colonists, — this simple memorandum : " A vessel from Ireland arrived here, *being sent by the Quakers* in Dublin, for those that were impoverished by the war here." Yet Quaker authors delight to detail the woes they endured : their vivid narratives fill many a capacious volume. They are perfectly trustworthy as far as the facts they relate were understood ; but they can hardly be said to give us uncolored pictures. They are, however, our only authorities for many of the cruelties alleged. Thomas Westgate, writing from England to the colony in 1671, said, " I dare not be an advocate to plead for the cursed generation of Quakers ; yet let me tell you New England suffers much in this country for imprisoning many of them, — and putting others of them to death, — and I could



heartily wish you had printed a narrative of your procedure with them, together with the grounds thereof." It would no doubt have corrected some misconceptions.

The sufferers of that time used to predict that dire calamities would come upon their opposers; and they were fond of tracing out the deaths of their principal persecutors.

Major Humphrey Atherton, for example, had reviewed his battalion one afternoon on the Common, and in the dusk of the evening had started for home in "great pomp and pride." His horse on a sudden stumbled, and threw him upon the ground so violently that he was instantly killed, "near the place," observes Besse, "where they usually loosed the Quakers from the cart, after they had whipped them." "Being taken up, and brought into the Court House, the place where he had been active in sentencing the innocent to death, his blood ran through the floor, exhibiting to the spectators a shocking instance of the divine vengeance against a daring and hardened persecutor."

Richard Davenport, commander of the castle before Roger Clap had been appointed, in the heat of a sultry day, went into his room, and lay down upon his bed for a little rest. "There he was struck

dead in a strange manner, by thunder and lightning." Instead of regarding this event as a judgment of the Lord, should we not acknowledge the special mercy which spared the whole company quartered there, though only a thin partition separated the room in which he was killed from the magazine of the castle?

Upon the accession of Charles II., John Norton had been persuaded, much against his will, to sail with Simon Bradstreet on a mission from the Colony to the new king. They were graciously received at the court, although the fears of the Colony had once reported that Norton was confined in the Tower—for Charles had reason to be offended with the men of Massachusetts. But George Fox confronted them in London, as did also John Copeland, whose ear had been cut off in Boston. It was rumored likewise, "that William Robinson's father was coming up from the North, to bring them to account for murdering his son." The Colonial agents were, however, not much troubled by these annoyances, and returned safely to America after their business was done.

Charles spoke honeyed words in his response. "He received the Colonies into his gracious protection, and confirmed their patent and charter."

But there were other contents in his royal letter. He decreed that justice in the Colony should always be administered in his name, and that all persons of honest lives should be admitted to the Lord's Supper. These two articles would abrogate at a stroke the independence of their courts and the authority of their churches. They gave intense displeasure to the sensitive Colonists. "There were some who would not stick to say that Mr. Norton had laid the foundation for the ruin of all their liberties." He had done all that he could; but now he saw that some of "his best friends began to look awry upon him." He was not of a buoyant constitution. He drooped under these neglects. Hitherto he had always rode upon the topmost wave of popular favor. This change distressed him much in private, but did not alter the merit of his public course. He preached in his pulpit, and led the devotions of his church, with the same unparalleled eloquence as before. After returning from his accustomed services one Sabbath morning, he was suddenly seized with faintness, and fell to the floor entirely dead. The Quaker, with relentless hand, has written, "He was observed to fetch a great groan, and, leaning his head against the mantle-piece, was heard to say, 'The hand (or judgment)



of the Lord is upon me ' ' ! This heavy visitation was also considered a mark of divine vengeance ; but rather let us say with Mather, " Sudden death with him was sudden glory."

Rugged but kind old John Endicott must also die. For a long time he had been almost the only one remaining, who could describe, with the fond loquacity of a personal remembrance, what rude surroundings had greeted that forest-birth of the infant state. He was almost the only one who had seen it rise from its narrow cradle to the wider sphere of its vigorous youth. What miraculous transformations had unfolded before his eyes !

For the last sixteen years, he had been the counsellor and chief of the Colony. It had been a time of storm. But his fearless and unvarying hand had held a prompt and steady sceptre till the end. No man ever laid it down with more tranquillity and grace. He did not fall by an untimely blow. In the beautiful language of the day, " old age and the infirmities thereof, coming upon him, he fell asleep in the Lord, on the 15th of March, 1665," at the age of seventy-seven ; " and he was with great honor and solemnity interred in Boston," on the 23d of the same month. His frank and independent spirit, and the great services he had

rendered the state, won their befitting guerdon in the public esteem. "He died poor," says the diary of Capt. John Hull, "as most of our rulers do, having more attended the public than their own private interests."

In the unflinching administration of what he thought to be justice, some men had suffered wrongfully ; but, says Palfrey, "he understood *himself* to be severe, only in the assertion of an absolute right, and the needful exercise of a public guardianship." "For my country and my God," was the motto inscribed upon his motives. Unqualified devotion to the one, and unreserved obedience to the other, ever gave to his career a peculiarly buoyant and resolute advance. No faultless character is claimed for him. His steel-bound nature presented too few apertures for the appeals of the gentler emotions. Yet it may well be doubted whether men less stern in their principles than he could have accomplished, amid all the obstacles that they had to confront, the great work to which Providence had called them, — the foundation of a republic strong enough, ere long, to throw its radiant and solid arch across an entire continent.

"These transient persecutions," in the elegant phrase of Mr. Bancroft, "begun in self-defence,

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were yet no more than a train of mists hovering of an autumn morning over the channel of a fine river, that diffused freshness and fertility wherever it wound." If those mists have not altogether disappeared, we can look beneath them over wide and blooming fields which that river continues to enrich.



II.

THE WITCHCRAFT DELUSION.



## II.

### THE WITCHCRAFT DELUSION.

**G**ALLOWS HILL still haunts the western border of Salem, a grim spectre of the dreadful past. Around its base have clustered the factories and homes of a thriving population, and their buildings begin to ascend its rocky sides. But the bald and ancient top continues to affront the open sky. Our eye cannot run up that rocky height, without recalling to our heart the most appalling event of Colonial history. There, looming against the summer clouds of 1692, nineteen innocent persons were hanged by the neck till they were dead. The witchcraft delusion is not a myth. Its solemn witness stands to-day, reciting as it has from the first the weird story of its wild executions.

This is almost the only spot that can be identified with the tragedy that was then enacted. The subject was fraught with horror to the minds of the



original actors. Their faltering lips refused to repeat to their children the harrowing tale. Hardly one oral tradition has come down from them to the present day. How deep is the pathos of such a silence! Those poor penitents avoided the theme with studious dread, and in their daily converse would pass and repass its local relics without a word.

But over the broad earth there are many spots that could speak to us in the language of Gallows Hill, and those voiceless fields. Every nation, every age, has brought its hecatomb of victims to the altar of this imaginary crime. It was the lot of our "City of Peace" to render one of the last, though by no means the largest, of these offerings of human life.

But why should a witch be hunted with the rude vengeance which the records of the older times all reveal? Can she be worthy of such severity? Our modern notion of her is a very merry one. A toothless, nervous old lady strides a broomstick, and rides a wayward, rollicking race, over the trees, among black clouds, stirring up little tempests of wind, and landing we don't know where, and don't care how. That is the witch of our ideas: why strive to hurt her? To be bewitched now-a-days is

to be thrilled with a fascination that is pleasant instead of malign. It is not the effect of an "evil eye," but of glances that beam with innocent charms. With us a magical touch is a touch of delight; enchantment bears the sense of Elysium. Perhaps we should not think it exaggeration to say that the Cupid of the classic story has surrendered his office to the first-class witch of our times. She brews no noxious poison but the philters of harmless love. She howls no horrid curses; but she sings in siren tones. She has no "black art" to ply, aided by diabolic powers. With coy and un-vexed management, she brings about her gladsome ends. How comes it to pass that such a dear, handy creature should have been condemned to die by the codes of every civilized country in the world?

Our reply to such a question must be briefly this. The meaning of the title was altogether different in former times from what it is now. It had ghostly terrors, of which the dawn of modern light has robbed it. We search for its definition. We are amazed to find that it embodies the most lurid notions that the mind has ever conceived. Dr. Ogilvie, in his learned revision of Webster to make the "Imperial Dictionary" of Great Britain, gives a

lustrous description of its evil import in the seventeenth century. "Witchcraft is the practice of witches, sorcery, enchantment, intercourse with the Devil, a supernatural power which persons were formerly supposed to obtain possession of by entering into *compact* with the Devil. Indeed, it was fully believed that they gave themselves up to him, body and soul, while he engaged that they should want for nothing, and should be able to assume whatever shape they pleased, to visit and torment their enemies, and accomplish their infernal purposes. As soon as the bargain was concluded, the Devil was said to deliver to the witch an imp, or familiar spirit, to be ready at call, and to do whatever it was directed. By the aid of this imp and the Devil together, the witch, who was almost always an old woman, was enabled to transport herself through the air on a broomstick or a spit, and to transform herself into various shapes, particularly those of cats and hares, to inflict diseases on whomsoever she pleased, and to punish her enemies in a variety of ways. The belief of witchcraft is very ancient. It was universally believed in Europe till the sixteenth century, and even maintained its ground with tolerable firmness till the middle of the seventeenth century. Vast numbers



of reputed witches were condemned to be burned every year ; so that in England alone it is computed that no fewer than thirty thousand of them suffered at the stake ! ” This great definition, pointed out to us by Mr. S. G. Drake, in his valuable introduction to a fine edition of Mather and Calef, is so clear and precise that we understand at once why *that* witchcraft was a capital offence. It was the very sin of sins. It was the most accursed iniquity, — nothing less than a personal league with the Evil One. It was not merely necromancy or magic, simply a wonder-working art. It was not the vague use of amulets and charms for the purpose of obtaining material good. It was not divination alone, which reads the thoughts of alien spirits, and turns the horoscope of coming events. It was not correspondence, by these means, with the unseen world, without regard to the character of the correspondent. This might be innocent. It might invite the intervention even of the pure angelic spirits. It might involve no great treason against God. But witchcraft was actual alliance with the prince of the power of the air. All nations then believed that mortal men, while still upon the earth, could become his pledged and formal confederates, and could join forces with him, and wicked spirits

beneath him, for the purpose of warring against the gospel, and defying the King of heaven. Is it strange that this was regarded as the most flagrant of crimes? In acknowledgment of such a contract, Satan, on his part, agreed to exercise his own supernatural powers in their behalf, and also to give *to them* the same powers, to a greater or less extent, as they proved to be his worthy supporters. Besides, this "covenant with hell" was thought to convey great advantage to the Prince of hell himself as well as to his human accomplice. He could not work with his best success in the sphere of this world, without the voluntary co-operation of some of its intelligent inhabitants. A bad man or a bad woman, who consented to be an instrument for his hand, was the mightiest weapon he could hurl against the ranks of the good. To such a federation was ascribed almost unlimited power. "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." If the seventeenth-century notion is indeed the one the Scriptures lodged in this word, no wonder the divine denunciation was proclaimed against it.

In the elaborate work of Mr. C. W. Upham upon this subject, published by Wiggin & Lunt, the power of a witch to afflict whomsoever she will is thus described: "She could throw them into convulsions,

cause them to pine away, choke, bruise, pierce, and craze them, and even subject them to death itself." She had the faculty of "second sight," and was able to communicate information from the spirit-world, like "mediums" of the present day. She could read inmost thoughts, press temptations upon those near or far away, bring up the shades of the departed, and ply the living with infernal arts of every kind. And, worst of all, she could come in her "shape," or apparition, to any persons, however distant from her "bodily presence," and operate upon them as though she were really there! It was this imagined fact which admitted the possibility of "spectral evidence," as it was termed, — evidence which proved to be the most disastrous element in the Salem trials. Those persons who were exercised by these malignant energies were said to be "bewitched."

Now, had such a terrific system of beliefs a groundwork in actual facts? No: we say boldly, no. There is not one accredited instance of the crime, as then understood, in all history, whether sacred or profane. "The Witch of Endor" was not a witch in their phraseology, but a conjurer only, whom God assisted once by a miracle, to her own great dismay. The Chaldeans and Magi had



no kin to this tremendous being. The Roman augur and the Grecian pythia were ignorant as infants compared with such a seer. The fortune-teller was common-place, and the exorcist was confined to a narrow field of operations, when put beside our ancestral wizard. In such a presence, their power was weakness, and their guilt was piety itself. This crime was essential diabolism. Assuredly, it was never practised.

But, for two centuries, the whole Christian world *believed* that it was practised. This belief was a fountain of unutterable woe. We are driven to ask the question, How it was possible for those who bore the form of humanity to acquire such a fiend-like repute. How came they to be even charged with such iniquities?

Reginald Scot, an author who wrote so long ago as 1584, attempted to answer this inquiry in a rare and ingenious book, entitled "The Discoverie of Witchcraft." It was written, as the humane man observed, "in behalfe of the Poore, the Aged, and the Simple." Its kind and reasonable suggestions ought to have put the world on guard against the errors into which it afterwards rushed. In a quaint and racy style, he describes the natural development of a hideous witch from misfortunes that

originally were not faults. "The sort of such as are said to be Witches are Women, which be commonly old, lame, bleare-eied, pale, fowle, and full of Wrinkels, poore, sullen, superstitious, and Papists, or such as know no Religion ; in whose drousie minds, the Divell hath gotte a fine Seat. They are leane and deformed, shewing Melancholie in their faces, to the Horror of all that see them. They are doting Scolds, mad, devilish, and not much differing from them that are thought to be possessed with Spirits." Their mode of support is precarious, he implies : "These miserable Wretches are so odious unto all their Neighbors, and so feared, as few dare to offend them, or denie them any thing they aske. . . . They go from House to House, and from Doore to Doore, for a pot full of Milke, Yest, Drinke, Pottage, or some such Reelease, without the which, they could hardlie live ; neither obtaining for their Service and Paines, nor by their Art, nor yet at the Divel's Hands (with whome they are said to make a perfect and visible Bargaine), either Beautie, Monie, Promotion, Welth, Worship, Pleasure, Honor, Knowledge, Learning, or any other Benefit whatsoever." Witchcraft does not pay, is the view of Reginald Scot. But they become at length hateful to their

entertainers. "In the Tract of Time, the Witch weareth odious and tedious to her Neighbors ; and they, againe, are despised and despited of hir, so as sometimes she curseth one, and sometimes another, and that, from the Maister of the House, his Wife, Children, Cattle, &c., to the little Pig that lieth in the Stie. Thus, in Processe of Time, they have all displeased hir ; and she hath wished evil Luck unto them all." Soon after this is started the infernal suspicion. "Some of her Neighbors die or falle sicke, or some of their children are visited with diseases that affect them strangeli, . . . which, by ignorant Parents, are supposed to be the Vengeance of Witches, . . . according to the common Saing, "*Inscitiae Pallium Maleficium et Incantatio*," Witchcraft and Inchantment is the Cloke of Ignorance. . . . Also, some of their Cattell perish, either by Disease or Mischance. Then they upon whom such Adversities fall . . . doo not onlie conceive but are resolved that all their Mishaps are brought to passe by hir onlie Means." Now comes the trial. "The Witch on the other Side being called before a Justice, by due Examination of the Circumstances, is driven to see hir Imprecations and Desires, and hir Neighbors' Harmes and Losses to concurre,

and, as it were, to take effect ; and so confesseth that she (as a Goddess) hath brought such Things to passe. Wherein, not onlie she, but the Accuser, and also the Justice, are sorelie deceived and abused ; . . . as that she hath doone, or can doo, that which is proper onlie to God himselfe."

Are not these admirable touches of truth ? But wise old Mr. Scot remained unheeded by the people. For more than a hundred years thereafter, men conducted as though common sense upon this subject had never entered a created brain. Literature upon it was abundant ; but, with hardly another exception, it only tended to exaggerate the false opinions already held. Bright-hearted Horace, Mr. Upham shows, was wise enough to reject them.

"These dreams and terrors magical,  
These miracles and witches,  
Night-walking sprites or Thessal bugs,—  
Esteem them not two rushes."

But Virgil thus bemoaned his sickly flock, that was under an "evil hand : " —

"They look so thin,  
Their bones are barely covered with their skin.  
What magic has bewitched the woolly dams ?  
And what ill-eyes behold the tender lambs ?"



Scot's work was burned by order of King James of Scotland. This redoubtable monarch then set himself to writing his own book upon the subject. It would have been well had he committed this edition also to the same flaming sepulchre in which he tried to bury the wiser words of his predecessor. But the evil work was printed at Edinburgh in 1597. Its title was simply "Dæmonologie." Though weak in thought, it was strong in credulity; and its royal authorship made it a great power in the kingdom.

Mr. Wright, in his "Narratives" (London, 1851), has traced the origin of this momentous production to the troubles that attended the wedding-trip of the royal pair!

James was married to Anne by proxy while she was still in her Danish home, and he in the lonely palace of Holyrood. As might be expected, the royal spouse awaited the arrival of the new queen with a good deal of impatience. The return voyage of the noble earl who stood as proxy, and was bearing the youthful bride to her anxious lord, was vexatiously delayed. The sea was tempestuous: the ship acted as if she were "bewitched." They were driven, at length, in great stress, upon the bleak coasts of Norway. The bad weather con-

tinued: there was danger that they would be obliged to stay there during the entire winter. James could not endure the thought of so long a solitude. Summoning up more courage than it was his wont to exhibit, he set off in search of his wandering wife. He found her, at last, in Norway. They were again married *in persona*, and, at the re-appearance of spring, re-embarked for Scotland. After a very rough passage, they landed in the dominions of the king, May 1, 1590.

But such supernatural calamities as they had endured involved something mysterious. James was convinced that there was a conspiracy against him. Dr. Fian, a renowned magician, "register to the Devil," and his two hundred witches, had been plotting to drown their connubial Majesties ere they reached *terra firma*! Accordingly they were brought to trial.

The examination of these sad wretches then resounded through the kingdom. Agnes Sampson testified that she had acted in the following remarkable scene: Accompanied with a great many other witches, she put to sea one evening, each riding in "a riddle or cive, with flaggons of wine, making merrie and drinking by the way in the same riddles or cives" until they reached a kirk some

distance up the coast. There they landed, "took hands on the lande and daunced this reill or short daunce, singing all with one voice, —

'Commer goe ye before, commer goe ye,  
Gif ye wall not goe before commer let me.'"

Then she confessed that one "Geillis Duncane *did* goe before them playing this reill or daunce, upon a small trumpe called a Jewes trumpe." James was so excited at this point, that he sent for Duncane, and obliged him to play over before the royal court the witches' reel upon a venerable jews-harp!

He expressed at one time some doubts about the truth of Agnes's marvellous stories. Thereupon "she declared unto him the very words which had passed between him and his Queen on the first night of their marriage, with their answers each to other; whereat the King wondered greatly, and swore by the living God, that he believed all the Devils in Hell could not have discovered the same."

Though we are told the King "took great delight" in this trial, and "was made in a wonderful admiration," the end of it was tragical in the extreme. Dr. Fian was "byrnt" at the stake. Agnes Samp-

soun was taken to the castle-hill, and there bound and "wirreit" (worried) until she was dead ; and almost every one of the two hundred expired in fearful tortures.

It was as a commentary on this great event that the royal treatise was composed. Such a work could but have a wide and melancholy effect. It riveted the fetters of superstition upon the minds of the people ; and, before a twelvemonth had elapsed, it issued in the destruction of no less than six hundred human lives, condemned for this offence of witchcraft.

James came to the throne of England in 1603 ; and he immediately propagated through his newly-acquired realms the favorite hobby to which his weak mind was devoted. In the preface of a fresh edition, he informs us of "the fearfull abounding at this time in this country of these detestible slaves of the devil, the witches or enchanterers." In consequence of this declaration, and of his unflagging zeal, a new and terrible law was enacted, which was not repealed for a hundred and fifty years. It was the statute which formed the legal basis of the proceedings at Salem.

Is it strange that measures like these, which stamped a vulgar superstition with the authority of



law, and the advocacy of a king, should have rendered the belief in it well-nigh universal? But, prior to this, witchcraft had been pronounced a capital crime by the most venerated courts of the earth.

In 1484, the papal see (Innocent VIII.) issued a bull, charging the Holy Inquisition to pursue with pitiless vengeance all persons guilty of this iniquity. Successive popes re-affirmed his command; and the pages of history are covered with the horrors which marked its bloody progress down the years for two centuries and a half. During the short space of three months in 1515, five hundred witches were burned at the stake in happy Geneva. For one hundred years, 1580 to 1680, in Germany alone, one thousand persons, on an average, *every year* were exterminated by the ravages of this imagined iniquity. Before its fatal march was checked, one hundred thousand souls had suffered judicial murder in that one country alone. Does this mammoth fact suffer the New-England tragedy of 1692 to stand out in solitary blackness?

Executions in Germany had hardly begun to abate, when they had entirely ceased in America. As late as 1749, a poor and witless nun closed the horrid drama there, by offering up her harmless life.

In the reign of Henry VIII., witchcraft was declared a felony of the deepest dye ; and Elizabeth signed a bill that imposed upon it the penalty of death. It was not, however, until the accession of James that this monster chimera began its wild riot with thirty thousand victims, not one of whom it released until it had crushed him to death. In 1647, nearly two hundred were executed in England for the crime of witchcraft. Upon the testimony of Mr. Upham, we learn that several suffered death in Great Britain but a few years before the proceedings commenced at Salem. Quite a number there were tried by the water ordeal, and were drowned at the very *time* the executions were occurring here ; and, some years *after* the New World had wholly recovered from its fatal mistake, a large number were sentenced and put to death in various parts of Europe. It cannot be said that these foreign trials were conducted in any particular less perversely than our own. Cruelty and superstition joined hand in hand ; and together they were ranging over the earth.

The frenzies which have generally laid hold of the popular mind have been unable to assail the best and loftiest spirits of the age. Far over the surging error these clear-eyed watchers have sent

forth a voice of wisdom, to guard men against the threatening storm. But, in our studies of the witchcraft delusion, we discover no such pleasing relief. Rare spirits, the most gifted minds of the age in which they lived, have all been involved in this great ocean of error, which at one time enveloped the world. In 1665, Sir Matthew Hale, who was universally admired for the purity of his character, and his varied and ample culture, presided at a trial in Suffolk County, England, which condemned two witches. The proceedings at this court, both on the part of the judge and the accusers, seemed to be patterns of what followed at Salem. The afflicted fell in fearful convulsions upon the floor. They were dumb and deaf and blind in turn, or all at once. They clenched their hands so furiously that the strongest men could not open them ; but, if by chance they barely touched the accused, on a sudden they would fly apart, and the sufferers would utter piercing shrieks.

In order to see that this was not a counterfeit distemper and cure, several honored gentlemen took a child, while she was in her fit, to the farther part of the hall, and then conveyed Amy Duny, one of the accused, from the bar out towards the suffering maid. Having blinded her eyes with an apron, a

third person touched her hand as though he was the accused. It produced the *same* effect as the touch of the witch did, before the court ! "whereupon the gentlemen returned, protesting that they did believe the whole transaction of this business was a mere imposture." Notwithstanding this, the prisoners were condemned. Sir Thomas Browne, a name of unrivalled celebrity in his time, appeared in the midst of this trial, and, having been invited to address the court, in an elaborate and ardent speech threw the whole weight of his powerful influence against the accused, and in favor of the reality of witchcraft. There seemed to be but one verdict from all concerned.

Reports of this famous trial were found in New England in 1692. There is no doubt but that it was regarded as the main text-book at the Salem court.

Men eminent in the church likewise held to this belief. Richard Baxter, our own beloved guide to the "Saint's Everlasting Rest," says, in his "Dying Thoughts," "I have many convincing proofs of witches, the contracts they have made with devils, and the power they have received from them." Don Villalpando, Advocate Royal in Spain, issued a work of four volumes on "Demonology and Natural Magic." It was republished by order of



Philip III., under sanction of the Holy Inquisition. It established and defined the doctrines of witchcraft held by all the Catholic world. There was no particular of the proceedings here which does not find ample support in its details.

Towards the close of the century, several sagacious men probed deep the prevalent error, and, by their publications upon the subject, endeavored to drive it from the popular belief. But their arguments were not regarded until after the catastrophe was passed. Every man of this class was called "a witch advocate," or "a gallant of the old hags." Such reformers were, therefore, few and cautious. Witchcraft had the credence of Sir Edward Coke. It was countenanced by Lord Bacon himself. It was maintained in an imposing convocation of bishops. It was preached by the clergy everywhere. More, Calamy, Glanvil, and Perkins, honored ministers, wrote in support of its reality. The educated classes of America were no exceptions to this army of errorists. Nurtured in European institutions, of course they entertained European views. Jurists, physicians, magistrates, and clergymen, and the populace almost without dissent, believed in the theory and the practice of witchcraft, through and through. What was to

protect a devoted village, when all the fury of this heaven-wide cloud should burst upon it?

Salem Village was the fair country seat of Salem Town. It was five miles distant, on the fruitful plains now occupied by Danvers Centre. It afforded rich farm-lands to the wealthier settlers, such as Governor Bellingham and Townsend Bishop. They still retained each his "house in town." But as the forests were cleared away, and the engrossments of agriculture increased, a neighborhood of yeomen was formed there which gradually became a permanent and independent community. In 1671, about forty years after the first grants of land were made, they organized a new church, separating from the First Church. Its ancient records, still preserved, are the chief source of the information we have concerning the witchcraft proceedings.

Among these sturdy freeholders, pending the settlement of boundary lines, many contests had arisen. Such had been the limitless expanse at the disposal of the court, that these lines in the original grants had been carelessly defined. But, with British vigor, each pioneer soon began to insist upon his personal rights. In some cases, trees were felled in the day-time by one claimant, which would

be dragged off and stored for fuel in the night-time by his rival! Real violence occasionally ensued, as well as costly suits, which, of course, they could ill afford to meet. "The farmers" and the "Topsfield men" became at length embroiled in bitter feuds. These tended to sour their spirits, and were the seeds, it is thought, of the wild animosities of the witchcraft delusion. Parish troubles had also distracted the new society. The first minister, Rev. J. Bayley, through the eight years of his labor, encountered determined opposition. The second minister, Rev. George Burroughs, was opposed by the friends of the first (*antiquus mos*!), and, after a three years' struggle, had fled to a mission-field on the shores of Casco Bay. He was a modest, pure-hearted man, small of stature, but of amazing physical strength. Certain prodigious feats which he performed were afterwards the occasion of his doom. They were regarded as proof that he had a diabolical confederate. He was summoned back from Maine to be put to death, on the charge of witchcraft. Deodat Lawson was his successor. His pastorate was brief; but afterwards, at the very crisis of the spreading frenzy, he returned, and preached to his former people a sermon full of lurid picturings of the power of Satan, and stern denun-

ciations of those in league with him. The whole populace rushed from the church "exceedingly mad against" the accused.

In 1688 Rev. Samuel Parris became the pastor. This is a name more loaded with odium than any other of the age. He was the *pontifex maximus* of the witchcraft disasters. It is not for us, however, to judge his heart. By no means does it appear that Mr. Upham is right in referring his activity, through all this terrific drama, to avaricious cunning, and a reckless determination to carry his point in transactions with the parish. Many things look suspicious, it is true ; but there is not one that is absolutely decisive. He was a designing and crafty man, no doubt ; a great manager, ambitious for power, and vain of his parts. He was, besides, very credulous and fanatical. He was a victim of superstition. But so was also the age in which he lived. Have we not seen that the *whole world* was tinctured with the very infatuation which swept this people on to utmost ruin ? Our main position is, that, in similar circumstances, arrest, conviction, and death would have followed the charge of witchcraft as swiftly and certainly in any other village of Christendom as in Salem. The reasoning would have been the same everywhere. It would have



been this : "Witchcraft, according to divine and human law, is a capital offence : the accused are guilty of it ; therefore let them be executed."

Prior to 1692, there had been executions for witchcraft in America. Margaret Jones was sentenced by the saintly John Winthrop, and hung in Boston in 1648. Ann Hibbins was sentenced by the revered John Endicott, and hung in 1655. The gentle William Penn presided at a trial in Philadelphia which convicted two Swedish women of the same offence. They escaped death by a loose phrase in their indictment, and not by any special favor on the part of their judge. Two residents of Springfield were condemned in 1652. They likewise evaded the penalty. Elizabeth Morse of Rowley would have been executed in 1680 but for the reprieve of the governor.

A case, however, occurred in Boston in 1688, which is supposed to have had direct bearing upon the Salem trials.

A fierce old woman, named Glover, in round language had cursed a little girl in Mr. Goodwin's family for accusing her daughter, who was a laundress, of stealing some linen. "She was one of the wild Irish," and no doubt, in her maternal exasperation, spoke with great vehemence. Soon after,

Oh, no! acquitted.

!!

the child fell into fits, which seemed "to have something diabolical in them." One of the sisters and two brothers followed her example, and, though apart from each other, would suffer in just the same place at the same time. "Their jaws, necks, shoulders, elbows, and all their joints," says Hutchinson, "would appear to be dislocated ; and they would make piteous outcries of burnings, cuts, and blows," the marks of which were afterwards visible. The wrathful woman was charged with "bewitching" them. She was accordingly executed.

The "Goodwin children" became so celebrated for their marvellous antics, that Cotton Mather took one of them into his own family, and endeavored faithfully to exorcise her. She must have been a wonderful adept in the histrionic art. For many days she played upon the good man's credulity with amusing adroitness. She gayly read off the abominable books of Quakers and Catholics, which the doctor earnestly hated ; but she could not decipher a syllable of the "Assembly's Catechism." She was struck dead at the sight of Cotton's "Milk for Babes," but doted on the "Oxford Jests." She was much in love with the Prayer-Book, but she shivered with horror at sight of the Holy Bible. She would whistle and sing and yell at family

prayers. She would riot in contortions and pains of every description, now choked by an invisible noose, now baked in an invisible oven, now chilled in invisible water, while her face would blacken or her skin would perspire with heat, or her shivering body would be covered with goose-flesh. Mr. Mather prepared a sermon upon the mysterious developments. It created a profound impression. It was published in a pamphlet, and distributed. It easily filled the country with the belief that this child was indeed "bewitched," — the victim of diabolical power.

Such accounts were considered ominous. They were thought to be proofs that Satan, with his confederate fiends, was about to make an onslaught upon the New World. Baffled in the other hemisphere, he would make his last stronghold in this. Here was to be fought his most desperate battle for final supremacy. The fearful struggle was at hand.

Such was the state of feeling, and the posture of affairs, when the outbreak occurred at Salem Village. Theories of law and medicine and theology, the world over, recognized the reality of witchcraft. The popular belief in it was intense enough to sustain almost any imposition bearing its name. The



community likewise had local traits which were peculiarly foreboding when considered in connection with such a superstition. They had the vigor of pioneers, and the unfaltering resolution of freemen. They had been accustomed to strife. They had been hardened by what they felt to be wrongs. Above all, they had the *moral force* of the Puritans. This had brought them across the ocean. This had armed them against the savage. This had carried them through many a conflict. They believed that a new struggle was at hand, more momentous than any in which they had engaged. They believed in God. He was the object of heartfelt homage. His cause was theirs. His cause was imperilled, and to its rescue they rallied.

Said an author of that day, "The New Englanders are a people of God ; settled in those which were once the Devil's territories, he has tryed all sorts of methods to overturn this poor Plantation, and so much of the Church as was 'fled into this wilderness.' But all those Attempts of Hell have hitherto been Abortive :— wherefore the Devil is now making one Attempt more upon us, an Attempt more difficult, more surprising, more snarled with unintelligible circumstances, than any that we have hitherto encountered ; an Attempt so critical that if



we get well through, we shall soon enjoy Halcyon Days, with all the Vultures of Hell trodden under our Feet."

During the witchcraft delusion, they felt that they were confronting, face to face, the Prince of the power of the air. With this one idea, a stern, self-sacrificing people threw themselves into the pitiless contest. They determined to do battle to the end, —to give no quarter till their detested foe was driven from the land.

We do well, as students of history, to pause for a moment, and admire the uncompromising consistency of those brave men. We have charges of cruelty and fanaticism to bring against them. But there was heroism, yes, devotion, in the stand they took. We see them grievously deceived ; but we need not be blind to the virtues they still possessed. The distressing details cause us to exclaim against strange excesses, and condemn what seemed to be obstinate blindness. We must not apologize for their wanton disregard of counter evidence, and the dictates of common humanity. We cannot disabuse our minds of the belief that some of the wily actors wilfully *plotted* to keep up the excitement, and took advantage of this fatal frenzy for objects of personal spite ; but, with no desire to

extenuate the follies or deny the sins of our forefathers, in reference to the mass of those who were implicated in it we must still give it the name of "*the witchcraft delusion.*"

An orator before the Historical Society finely said, "The witchcraft madness was no doubt a dreadful passage in a majestic movement of events. Even here, however, the great difference between the people of Massachusetts, and of other communities whose history bears no such stain, is, that what both alike professed to believe, the former more consistently and honestly acted out. Deplore as we may the grievous infatuation, still, *more* even than we lament and condemn that, may we not find cause to applaud the brave and constant spirit that never would quail before the awful delusion that possessed it? Set upon by invisible and supernatural foes, they thought of nothing but prompt defiance and inflexible resistance, and the victory which God would give his people."

Mr. Parris had in his household at Salem Village several slaves. Two of them were "John Indian" and his wife Tituba. These two were natives of South America. They were saturated with the wild superstitions of the race from which they sprang. They infused pagan elements into

the existing fanaticism, even if they did not originate the entire convulsion. But a circle of young girls, with whom these swarthy creatures had mysterious interviews, formed the habit of coming regularly to the parsonage during the winter of 1691-92. This circle used to meet for the purpose of practising the arts of palmistry and magic. They resembled as nearly as possible "the circle" of the modern Spiritualists. They were, however, children; and wise warning or sound correction would have broken up their illicit proceedings. Cotton Mather advised, at the beginning, that they be separated "far asunder, and he would singly provide for six of them." Had this advice been followed, it would have averted all the horrors of the Salem Witchcraft. In addition to the Indian slaves, the names of eleven girls are given who were members of the circle. They are referred to continually, during the prosecutions, as the "afflicted children." Elizabeth Parris was the daughter of the minister. Although only nine years of age, she conducted a leading part in the early stages of the affair. Before it had progressed very far, however, she was judiciously sent away from home. Abigail Williams, her cousin, eleven years of age, lived in Mr. Parris's family, and, from the beginning to the end, was one



of the most audacious accusers. Ann Putnam, twelve years of age, the daughter of the parish-clerk, must have been a child of astonishing precocity. Her prominence was so odious throughout, that the tomb in which she was laid, at an early death, has been religiously shunned ever since. The dying have often requested not to be laid by her side. Mary Wolcott was the daughter of the nearest neighbor, and the "way through" from her father's house to the parsonage plat can still be detected. She does not appear to have been the worst of the miscreant set, although her activity was noted and disastrous. Mercy Lewis, seventeen years of age, was a servant-girl. Her unfaltering purpose and skilful management throughout made her responsible for much of the distress which came upon the whole community. Others are less conspicuous than these ; but the whole circle seemed to move with entire unanimity in acts of reckless presumption and appalling malignity. "For-myself," says Mr. Upham, "I am unable to determine how much in their conduct may be attributed to credulity, hallucination, and the delirium of excitement, or to deliberate malice and falsehood."

A few females, more elderly than these, occasionally attended the mischievous meetings, and finally



became active in the accusations. Before the winter had passed, the circle had grown to be experts in the illicit arts they practised ; and at times they would display their attainments, to the great amazement of spectators. They crept slyly into holes, dropped unconscious upon the floor, made antic and unnatural gestures, and could writhe in dreadful contortions, and utter piercing outcries. At first no mention was made of their tormentors. Gradually, however, the attention of the families with which they met was fully awakened ; and ere long the whole neighborhood was filled with the story of their unaccountable behavior. Their condition became worse and worse. They excited the deepest sympathy. Dr. Gregg, the village physician, was called. Baffled by the unknown symptoms, he gave it as his grave opinion that they were "under an evil hand ;" that is, that they were "bewitched." This professional decision spread like wildfire. The whole country around became alarmed. Witchcraft was the all-engrossing topic. Multitudes thronged in to witness the tremendous convulsions of the "afflicted children." A love of notoriety seemed suddenly to awake within them. From that time, perhaps it was their controlling motive. Soon they extended their operations to more public

places. Their loud outcries and awful fits disturbed prayer-meetings and the services of the Sabbath.

On the 20th of March, Mr. Lawson preached in his old pulpit. He has left a description of his experience which only an eye-witness could have composed. "There were sundry of the afflicted persons at meeting. They had several sore fits in the time of publick worship, which did something interrupt me in my first prayer, being so unusual. After psalms was sung, Abigail Williams said to me, 'Now stand up, and name your text!' And, after it was read, 'It is a long text.' In the beginning of sermon, Mrs. Pope, a woman afflicted, said to me, 'Now, there is enough of that!' And in the afternoon, Abigail Williams, upon my referring to my doctrine, said to me, 'I know no doctrine you had; if you did name one, I forgot it.' In sermon time, when Goodwife C. [orey] was present, Abigail Williams called out, 'Look where Goodwife C. sits on the beam,—her yellow bird betwixt her fingers'! Anne Putman, another girl afflicted, said, 'There was a yellow bird sat on my hat as it hung on the pin in the pulpit!' But those that were by restrained her from speaking loud about it."

No wonder such performances "something interrupted" him, as they did all others in that sober Puritan audience. Instead of rebuking the disturbers, however, almost every one regarded them with pity and solemn awe. A few good people ventured to express their disapproval of the rude behavior. They would not go to church to listen to such outrageous insolence.

They were marked by the offenders for subsequent vengeance. Mr. Parris was greatly troubled. He summoned the neighboring ministers to his own house ; and there they spent a day in fasting and prayer, in view of these strange dispensations. The children performed before their eyes. The reverend gentlemen were amazed and confounded. They solemnly re-affirmed the opinion of Dr. Gregg. They declared it to be their full belief that the Evil One had confederates in that community, bewitching these poor girls. This second professional decision banished every doubt. "Society at once was dissolved into a wild and excited crowd. Men and women left their fields, their houses, their employments, to witness the awful unveiling of the demoniac power, and to behold the workings of Satan himself upon the victims of his wrath."

Prompted by the principle that the Devil could



operate upon human affairs only through the instrumentality of human beings in league with himself, the question in all minds, and on every tongue, at once became, "Who, who, are those among us in league with him, afflicting these girls?" For some time, the girls held back their charges. The excitement deepened, and the importunity increased. "Who is it that bewitches you?" was the demand now pressing in from every side. At length, timing the announcement with exquisite delicacy, and selecting the first victims with admirable skill, one after another cried out, "Good," "Osburn," "Tituba." Sarah Good was a poor, "bed-rid" beggar, broken down by ill-fortune, and the object already of many suspicions. Sarah Osburn, "a melancholy, distracted old woman," had lost her good estate by an unhappy second marriage. Her mind was shattered. For a long time, she had been unable to take care of herself. Gossip about her was rife in the community. Tituba was the Indian woman mentioned before.

On the 29th of February, 1692, warrants were duly issued against these three persons. The complainants were four respectable men in the village. It was no child's play with them : it was a war with the Prince of hell. When the examinations came



off, a vast crowd assembled to witness them. It was necessary to adjourn from the village-tavern to the meeting-house. John Hathorne and Jonathan Corwin, two of the most reputable magistrates of the Commonwealth, conducted the examinations. With great gravity, and a solemn prayer, they entered upon their task. Sarah Good was first put upon the stand. The examination proceeded in the following form. The prisoner stands on a platform in front of the excited assembly. The afflicted children are all present, and alert. The magistrate puts his questions in this amazing style, —

“Sarah Good, what evil spirit have you familiarity with?”

“None.”

“Have you made no contracts with the Devil?”

“No.”

“Why do you hurt these children?”

“I do not hurt them.”

At certain junctures, the girls fall down, “dreadfully tortured and tormented,” not being able to look at the accused without a spasm. If, however, they are brought to her, and made to *touch* her, the diabolical fluid immediately darts back into the witch; and they are relieved at once. Such acting

could but have an overwhelming effect upon the court and all assembled. The proceedings would then go forward as though conviction was a foregone conclusion, and the evidence of the afflicted children absolute proof.

Tituba, the slave-woman, though denying at first the charge of witchcraft, afterwards acknowledged it. They had searched her body, and found several hard scars. They were said to be made by the Devil, but were, in reality, produced by the sting of the Spaniard's whip in South America. She had obeyed, however, "the black man with a book." But she renounced her compact with him, and all its horrible obligations. She described minutely her infernal operations ; and by her strange and awful fancies, suggested by her heathen youth, added much to the terrors of the occasion. Her behavior was probably a part of the plot to drive on the delusion. As soon as she confessed, the afflicted children were calm. These three were all committed to jail for trial.

Among the evidences of witchcraft, one was the "*witch-mark*." The Devil was supposed to affix this to the bodies of his confederates, as a seal, and afterwards that spot would become discolored or callous. The law provides that it shall be

searched for. At Salem, a committee for each sect permanently discharged this odious and cruel office. They would test the supposed teat by running a pin through it. Some such dead or darkened spot could be found on almost any person.

Another class of testimony was called "spectre-evidence." It was supposed that the witches could go to those whom they wished to afflict, in the likeness of any animal, — a dog, a hog, a cat, a rat, a toad; or any birds, particularly yellow-birds. They could likewise go in their own apparition, however far away their actual body was. This power was also recognized in the books of law. With such evidence admitted, the defence of an *alibi* was entirely void; and no charge could be disproved which the imagination could invent.

A witch could also act upon her victims at a distance by means of "puppets." These were little bundles of cloth in any form, or amorphous. Whatever was done to the puppet would be suffered by the party bewitched; for example, a pin stuck in it would pierce the flesh of the person. A bottle of old rusty pins is preserved in the Court House at Salem, said to have been taken from puppets and the bodies of the afflicted children.



But to resume: the excitement was not quelled by these commitments. Tituba had mentioned four others as engaged with her in their Satanic occupations. Two were already in chains. Who were the other two? The girls continued to be tortured. Ere long, "they cried out upon" another: this was Martha Corey, a pious, sweet-tempered lady, wife of old Giles Corey. Her only fault was her disapproval of the actions of the girls. She also was committed; the accusers, at her examination, executing some of their rarest feats. The success they achieved in this case emboldened them. Their next victim was a lady without a superior in social esteem and religious character, — Rebecca Nurse, a venerated mother in Israel. Several times during the examination, the magistrates seemed about to give way to the moral effect of her conscious innocence: it was only by the most tumultuous convulsions that the accusers could keep them firm. She was at length committed.

All caution seemed now to be abandoned. A mere infant, four years old, was next imprisoned for the crime. The Devil had effected a lodgement in Salem Village: this was the overwhelming thought in every mind. At this juncture, Deodat



Lawson arrived in town, and preached his ever-memorable sermon.

He took for his text Zechariah iii. 2. He pictured the grim warfare of Satan : he called upon God's people to rally against him. The effect of his discourse was immense : awe, anger, consternation, and frantic zeal, all were augmented in the hearts of the hearers.

It was truly a masterly effort : its imagery was sublime and terrific. The summons to confront unflinchingly their hellish foe was in the highest style of impassioned eloquence. At once it was printed, and distributed throughout the land. Mr. Parris also took occasion to preach upon the all-engrossing theme.

It was sacramental day. He announced for his text this awful charge, "Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" The sister of Rebecca Nourse was present, — a noble-hearted sister, who could not endure such a fling against one who had sat with her, she knew, in sincere and sacred communion at the table of the Lord. She was then chained in a noisome dungeon, awaiting the horrors of a frenzied tribunal. Sarah Cloyse's heart was full : she could not stay in such a lying company. She rose at once, and passed out of

the meeting-house to her home. The congregation were greatly amazed ; but so runs the relation of one who was there. "She was afterwards seen by some in their fits, who said, 'O Goodwife Cloyse, I did not think to see you here!' And, being at their red bread and drink [that is, at a diabolical feast], said to her, 'Is this a time to receive the sacrament? You ran away on the Lord's day, and scorned to receive it in the meeting-house ; and is this a time to receive it? I wonder at you.'" Well might they "wonder" at the bare idea of a pure and pious lady like Sarah Cloyse mingling in the festival of devils? Why did it not seem so strange to her neighbors as to be wholly incredible?

But charges were renewed against prominent persons. A special "council" came down from the General Court to examine them. This was an imposing procedure. The council consisted of the deputy governor and five other magistrates. They came displaying all the insignia of office, and forms of State. It was a great day for Salem. The entire population were out. They crowded into "the great and spacious meeting-house," where the grand judiciary was held, instead of at the village. At such a crisis as this, nothing could have been more imprudent than such an extraordinary act.

It added fuel to the flaming excitement of the masses who gazed upon it. For a preliminary examination, simply with a view to commitment, it was unnecessary and reprehensible in the highest degree. Sarah Cloyse was the accused, together with Elizabeth Proctor. The inquisition of the "council" was teasing and frightful. The powers of the prisoners failed. Sarah Cloyse sank down "in a dying fainting fit," and weakly called for water. "Her spirit," screamed the band of the afflicted, "is gone to prison to her sister Nourse"! Goodwife Proctor was charged with having urged one of the girls to sign the Devil's book. "Dear child!" exclaimed the accused in her agony, "it is not so." "There is another judgment, dear child!" Then the accused turned upon her husband, and declared that he, too, was a wizard. All three were committed, April 2, 1692.

The witnesses, in their evidence, had ascribed most blasphemous actions to the prisoners. They painted the infernal sacrament in lurid colors. The Devil was ministrant, these poor creatures were deaconesses, and *their own blood* was the wine. It is passing strange that their youthful imaginations were capable of inventing such awful falsehoods. As the testimony came out, all present were



horrified : it tended to deepen their resolve to punish the fiendish crime. Four more were committed April 19. One of these four was old Giles Corey.

This man had a peculiar repute in our gossiping community. He was a singular character. Somehow he had got a bad name. But it does not appear that he deserved it. He simply dared to disregard the conventional manners of the day. He ventured to be odd. He cared not a whit for the small talk and the small customs of those about him. Until 1659, his home was in Salem Town. For thirty years, however, he had been a farmer of the Village. The farm contained more than a hundred acres of excellent land, and he owned meadows also near Ipswich River. The contract with his carpenter for building his house is still preserved. It was to be "twenty feet in length, fifteen in breadth, and eight feet stud." Mr. Upham, in his vivid manner, refers in this connection, to the general size of houses in those days. One of Winthrop's letters describes a tempest, "than which I never observed a greater," which blew off the roof of Lady Moody's house and all the chimney above it. So sound were the slumbers of that peaceful time, that "Ten persons lay under it, and knew not of it till they arose in the morn-



ing!" But the fact comes out, that this fine lady's house was flat roofed, of one story, and nine feet in height!

Corey had had many a rough passage in his life. He was a bold man, of exuberant physical strength. He was not inclined to surrender his point, even though he was obliged to resort to violence in order to maintain it. Yet he had a generous and forgiving nature. He was careless about avoiding "the appearance of evil." Going into town one day with a cart-load of wood, a neighbor met him, and shouted out, "How now, Giles : wilt thou never leave thy old trade? Thou hast got some of my wood here upon thy cart." Corey answered "True, I did take two or three sticks, to lay behind the cart to ease the oxen because they bore too hard." Such peccadilloes, repeated frequently, furnished constant material for the scandal-mongers.

A hired man, named Goodell, fell sick at his house in the winter of 1676. He was at length carried home to his friends by Goodwife Corey. Soon after he died. It was whispered about, that he had come to his death in consequence of an awful flogging, given him in a passion by Corey. Corey was brought to trial for murder. There was evidence to show that the poor man had

been beaten in his own family after his return ; though it could not be denied, that, for a certain fault, he had been severely chastised by his former master. Yet as no cause for ill-will was manifest, and Corey's wife had given him the best of care, notwithstanding the prejudice against the accused, he was finally discharged. This affair came up again, however, in a far different court from that.

John Gloyd, another laborer on his farm, was a man of sullen and unforgiving temper. They had fallen out with each other a number of times ; but, in 1678, a quarrel between them about wages had grown so fierce that they resorted to the law. The case was, however, taken out of court, and put into the hands of referees, mutually chosen. It was decided against Corey by the voice of John Procter, who was the friend of Gloyd. The loser expressed himself perfectly satisfied, and, in his elastic, generous way, enjoyed a treat over the affair with Procter ; " for they drank wine together, and Procter paid for part, and Corey for part."

But a few days had passed, when, one morning before daylight, Procter's house took fire, and was burned to the ground. There seemed to be men about the neighborhood always eager to lay every evil thing that happened to poor Corey's account.

He was accused of being the incendiary, and was indicted for trial. By incontestible evidence, an *alibi* was proved, and Corey was triumphantly acquitted. He thought however, from this high-handed attempt to wrong and ruin him, and from statements at the trial hinting at other current calumnies, that it was time for him to put a stop to the malignant and mischievous slanders which had been flying about concerning him. He instituted proceedings against quite a number of witnesses for defamation of character, and recovered damages against them all. This sharp course, however, did not put his maligners into permanent good humor.

But, for fourteen years after this event, the hard-working but healthy old man lived in comparative peace. He was now an octogenarian. He had been married three times. Four daughters, children of his first wife, were all the mistresses of happy households around him. His present wife, Martha, was a woman of prayer. Through her loving influence, no doubt, the weather-beaten, "weary" husband was led to the throne of heavenly grace. The consolations of religion began to cheer his long-troubled heart. When the silver of more than eighty years was mantling his head, he advanced to the altar, and made a profession of his



faith in the Saviour. In his confession to the First Church, the one with which he united, he spoke of his "scandalous life." His humble words were entirely satisfactory to the Christians there, and he was received to cordial fellowship. His trials seemed at length to have reached a termination. With a peaceful hope in a happy home he was preparing to die. But, just before he entered the haven of eternal repose, a storm, more lurid with lightnings and more furious with deadly gales than he had ever encountered, lashed the sea around him, and drove him in its awful rage right upon the rocks. He was wrecked in the fearful surge.

When his wife was first arraigned for witchcraft, he was himself a firm believer in the prevalent delusion. She, however, had been one of the two or three persons in the entire community who had the sense and boldness to declare "that she did not think that there were any witches." A committee from the church called upon her with suspicions raised by the outcries of the afflicted children. She received them in a smiling manner, and said, "I know what you are come for : you are come to talk with me about being a witch ; but I am none" ! They did not "get on" much in their interview,



and left her thoroughly convinced of her knowledge of the Scriptures and of her sprightly politeness.

But her "shape" continued to torment the girls. She was brought before the magistrates, and, despite all her virtues, was promptly committed. While undergoing her final trial, with serene and firm composure, she re-asserted her disbelief in the delusion. All the wiles of the crafty girls could not confound her; and she listened to her sentence with a heart undismayed by the terrors it denounced.

"Sister Martha Corey," runs a record in Mr. Parris's Church book, after her condemnation, "was this day in public, by a general consent, voted to be excommunicated out of the Church." The pastor and three brethren carried the vote to Salem prison. "Whereupon, after a little discourse, and after prayer, which she was willing to decline, the dreadful sentence of excommunication was pronounced against her." At length she was carried to the scaffold. Calef tells us that "Martha Corey, protesting her innocence, concluded her life with an eminent prayer upon the ladder."

We cannot refrain from inserting here part of a very quaint but plaintive ballad, which appeared in a Salem paper many a long day since. How

true it is that pleasantry and pathos may be linked in one subtle thought! Irony may also hide a keen point in the feathery stuff. The author is nameless. The piece has been rescued from oblivion by the vigilant Mr. Drake, and is in the safe custody of his opulent work on Witchcraft. We have room for a few lines only.

Come all New England men,  
And hearken unto me,  
And I will tell what did befalle  
Upon y<sup>e</sup> Gallows tree.

In Salem Village was the place,  
As I did heare them saye,  
And Goodwyfe Corey was her name,  
Upon that paynfull daye.

This Goody Corey was a witch,  
The people did believe,  
Afflicting of the Godly ones,  
Did make them sadlie grieve.

There were two pyous matron dames,  
And goodly maidens three,  
That cryed upon this heynous witch  
As you shall quicklie see.

And when before the magistrates  
For tryall she did stand,

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This wicked witch did lye to them  
While holding up her hand.

"I pray you all good gentlemen,  
Come listen unto me,  
I never harmed those two Goodwyfes  
Nor yet these Children three.

"I call upon my Saviour Lord  
(Blasphemously she sayd),  
As witness of my innocence,  
In this my hour of need."

The Godly ministers were shockt,  
This witch prayer for to hear.  
And some did see y<sup>e</sup> Black Man there  
A whispering in her eare.

She rent her cloaths, she tore her haire,  
And lowdly she did crye,  
"May Christ forgive mine enemies  
When I am called to dye !"

Dame Corey lived but six days more,  
But six days more lived she,  
For she was hung at Gallows Hill  
Upon y<sup>e</sup> Locust tree.

No doubt the husband of Martha Corey was at first much shocked at her repudiation of all belief in the doctrine of witchcraft. It was thought by



the most eminent minds that such unbelief was little better than blank infidelity.

A member of the Royal Society in England, but a few years before, had written, "Atheism is begun in Sadducism. And those that dare not bluntly say, 'There is no God,' content themselves, for a fair step and introduction, to deny there are spirits or witches!" Richard Baxter said, about the report concerning the "Goodwin children" "The evidence is so convincing, that he must be a very obdurate Sadducee who will not believe."

Around the family altar, therefore, Giles Corey had probably spoken sharply to his wife, and rebuked her for this lack of faith, in his rough, impetuous way. Perhaps he had likewise made imprudent speeches abroad, and, in his vexation, had fallen into his life-long phrases, saying that "she acted as though the Devil was in her."

A strange paper has been preserved, which was evidently prepared for use against her at her trial. It was abandoned, however; for although it shows that Giles believed himself, and every thing about him, to be "bewitched," he was not willing to say that his own wife was the witch. It runs thus:—

"The evidence of Giles Corey testifieth and saith, that last Saturday evening, sitting by the fire, my wife asked me



to go to bed. I told her I would go to prayer, and when I went to prayer I could not utter my desires with any sense, nor open my mouth to speak. My wife did perceive it, and came toward me, and said she was coming to me. After this, in a little space, I did according to my measure attend the duty. Some time last week, I fetched an ox, well, out of the woods, about noon, and he laying down in the yard I went to raise him, to yoke him ; but he could not rise, but dragged his hinder parts as if he had been hip-shot. But after, did rise. Another time, going to my duties, I was interrupted for a space, but afterwards I was helped according to my poor measure. My wife hath been wont to set up after I went to bed ; and I have perceived her to kneel down on the hearth, as if she was at prayer, but heard nothing ! ”

Such a document could serve no purpose at court ; but what an inlook it gives to the fireside of those two artless old people ! There was the calm and experienced Christian matron, making the “hearth ” her closet of prayer, at an hour when no one would intrude ; and there was the bluff, unchastened convert, who had come late to a religious life, whose mouth had long been used to sentiments not akin to devotion at all. No wonder the poor old man was not an adept in “uttering his desires” !

Why the girls selected him for their outcries cannot be told ? Perhaps, since his wife’s actual commitment, a re-action had taken place, and he had

manifested his abhorrence of their duplicity. Certain it is, that, if he felt this abhorrence, he would have expressed it without fear or favor. His examination was in the meeting-house of the Village.

"Giles Corey," said Hathorne, the magistrate, "you are brought before authority upon high suspicion of sundry acts of witchcraft. Now tell us the truth in this matter."

"I hope through the goodness of God I shall; for that matter I never had no hand in, in my life."

"Which of you have seen this man hurt you?"

Four of the girls at once affirmed that he had hurt them. And they proved it on the spot by spasms and awful convulsions.

"What was the reason," said Goodwife Bibber, "that you were frightened in the cow-house?" And then the questionist was suddenly seized with a violent fit. "I do not know any thing that frightened me!" All the afflicted were seized, now, with fits, and troubled with pinches. Then the court ordered his hands to be tied. "What! is it not enough to act witchcraft at other times, but must you do it now, in face of authority?"

Overwhelmed by the dread displays before him, involving so much mystery, and evoking the sympathy, even of his aged heart, he answers, "I am a poor

creature, and cannot help it." Upon the motion of his head again, they had their heads and necks affected. Thomas Gold testified that he heard him say that he knew enough against his wife that would do *her* business. "What was that you knew against your wife?" The holy courage of his spirit began to rise. The reply befitted the most heroic martyr of that sad time. "*Why, that of living to God, and dying to sin!*" "One of his hands was let go, and several were afflicted. He held his head on one side, and then the heads of several of the afflicted were held on one side. He drew in his cheeks, and the cheeks of the afflicted were sucked in."

One testified something about "temptations he had had to make way with himself." This revealed the fact that a dark struggle had been going on in his mind. Perhaps he was almost driven to suicide by the recollection of the little part he had performed in bringing his wife into her awful condition, and his greater part in driving on the public frenzy. Little did he think then of that mode of "making way with himself," to which his splendid will at length should rise, and which was ever after to be lauded in the annals of this delusion as its most guiltless and glorious act.



At the same time he was committed, Mary Warren was sent to jail. She had been one of the most violent accusers. She was suddenly one of the accused. What was meant by this new move? She would be a spy in the enemies' camp, to warn and aid the girls from that point. Her part was planned for her, no doubt, by the malignant "circle." She acted it out with deliberate cunning from the first. Her apparent defection would indicate, it was thought, that the girls were not acting in concert. She suffered herself to be convicted, that she might avert suspicion from the rest, while they continued to play their high and dangerous game. Four prisoners, who were comrades with her during her confinement, made a deposition to this effect:—

"We heard Mary Warren several times say, that the magistrates might as well examine Keysar's daughter, that had been distracted many years, and take notice of what she said, as well as any of the afflicted persons."

As if to avert suspicion of her own imposture, she spoke afterwards of her distempered head, which from time to time would be filled with shapes that tortured her. But, when her public trial came on, she was wholly on her guard. She solemnly affirmed that she had formed a league



with Satan. She had "signed his book." At the timely moment, however, then and there, she renounced her league forevermore. Her confession was wild with fragments of imagined conversation with the Evil One, and was often broken by fits of long duration. Mr. Parris, reporter of the case, makes this memorandum :—

"Note, that not one of the sufferers was afflicted during her examination, after once she begun to confess, though they were tormented before."

Her struggle with Satan was long and fearful, before she could tear herself from his desperate clutches. At length she was victorious ; and then she gave such a circumstantial and horrid exposé of the sins of witchcraft, that it confirmed the faith of the eager listeners in its reality, and cleared her easily of all its punishments. She acted her part with dexterous address.

In descriptions of the diabolical sacrament, a "man in black" had been spoken of. Who was this? High and dreadful disclosures were expected in the response. They were truly at hand, when Rev. George Burroughs was declared a witch, — this term being then applied indiscriminately to males and females. He was laboring in his hum-

ble field in Maine ; but they despatched the sheriff, arrested him rudely, and committed him for trial. Nothing could have prompted this selection but pure and simple malice. There was existing, however, an old parish-grudge, which leagued well with a desire on the part of the accusers to show the fearful power they could wield.

The prisons now were almost full of those who had "signed the book" of the Devil, putting themselves in solemn federation with him.

In the town of Andover, a good man's wife fell sick. He became convinced, by the physician attending, that she was "bewitched." He drove down to Salem Village to ascertain from the "afflicted children" who was her tormentor. Two of them returned with him to Andover. "Never," says Mr. Upham, "did a place receive such fatal visitors. The Grecian horse did not bring greater consternation to Ancient Ilium. Immediately after their arrival, they succeeded in getting more than fifty of the inhabitants into prison, several of whom were hanged!" Panic spread everywhere. The idea prevailed, that the only way to prevent an accusation was to become an accuser. The confessing witches were thus greatly multiplied, and the power of the delusion mightily strengthened. Fear was on every face, and distress in every heart.

Many quit the country altogether. Business was at a stand-still. The conviction settled upon the people that an infernal confederacy had got foothold in the land, and was carrying it over to the power of the Evil One.

At this crisis, May 14, 1692, Sir William Phips arrived in Boston with a most momentous commission. The government, under the old charter, was abrogated ; and the new charter, making Massachusetts a royal province, instead of an independent colony, commenced its unwelcome sway.

Rev. Increase Mather, who had been the agent of the State at the royal court for five years, was invited to nominate the officers of the incoming administration. Phips was appointed governor at his suggestion. Concerning his character as a ruler, Hutchinson slyly says, "His conduct when captain of a ship-of-war is represented as very much to his advantage ; but further talents were necessary for the good government of a province." Had he been a great-hearted man, he might, in the exercise of his newly-acquired power, have done much to assuage the growing frenzy. Instead of that, he sent a petty, cruel order down to the jails of Salem, requiring that those imprisoned for witchcraft should be thrown into irons at once.



A scrap from the account-book of John Arnold, the jailer, has recently been found. It has these significant items : " May 23. To shackles for ten prisoners ;" " May 29. To one pair of irons for Mary Cox ;" &c. At this time, the prisons in all the vicinity of Salem were full. There had been no final trials at all. Urged by a sense of the emergency, although he had no shadow of authority for the act, the governor constituted a special Court of Oyer and Terminer. It was made up of seven judges, armed with his commissions. The deputy-governor, William Stoughton, was chief-justice : most of its members were citizens of Boston. They were impartial men, if any could be found ; although, like their fellow-citizens, they were bond-slaves of the delusion.

The court was opened at Salem in the first week of June. And now the scenes of the preliminary examinations were to be repeated at a more august tribunal. The character of the evidence was the same ; and the futility of all defence, with the existing laws, was quite as apparent.

Bridget Bishop was the only one tried at the first session. She was a weak, irascible woman, although in respectable life, — occupying the very house in town where the honored author, Mr. Upham, after-



wards resided. She was convicted by the fits and fancies of the girls ; and, within a week, the dreadful sentence was executed on Gallows, or Witch, Hill.

After this first brief act of the bloody drama on which they had entered, the court withdrew to take breath. They wished to examine their position. It was found that there was no statute in the Province in actual force against witchcraft at the time of the commitments. The old enactment of James the First was regarded as sufficient authority. Just as the special court were upon the point of adjourning, the General Court revived the laws of the first charter, dated 1641. The one against witches was very concise : " If any man or woman be a witch (that is, hath or consulteth with a familiar spirit), they shall be put to death." These laws were drawn up by the celebrated John Cotton. They are termed " The Body of Liberties." In the margin, against this paragraph, are the references, Deut. xiii. 6-10, xvii. 2-6 ; Ex. xxii. 20. By this action, the Legislature adopted the proceedings at Salem as a Provincial matter, for which the immediate locality was not responsible, but the country at large.

During the recess of the court, the Governor

and Council presented a request to the prominent clergymen of the metropolis for their advice in the existing state of things. Mr. Hutchinson gives us the famous document entire. It conveys the calm opinions of the cultivated and pious men of the day.

*The Return of several Ministers consulted by his Excellency and the Honorable Council upon the present Witchcraft in Salem Village.*

BOSTON, June 15, 1692.

I. The afflicted state of our poor neighbors that are now suffering by molestations from the invisible world, we apprehend so deplorable, that we think their condition calls for the utmost help of all persons in their several capacities.

This justified their intervention.

II. We cannot but, with all thankfulness, acknowledge the success which the merciful God has given to the sedulous and assiduous endeavours of our honorable rulers to defeat the abominable witchcrafts which have been committed in the country, humbly praying that the discovery of those mysterious and mischievous wickednesses may be perfected.

This was a courtly compliment.

III. We judge, that, in the prosecution of these and all such witchcrafts, there is need of a very critical and *exquisite caution*, lest, by too much credulity for things received only upon the *Devil's authority*, there be a door opened for a long train of miserable consequences, and Satan get an advantage over us; for we should not be ignorant of his devices.

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This is royal advice. Would that it had been followed !

IV. As, in complaints upon witchcraft, there may be matters of inquiry which do not amount unto matters of presumption, and there may be matters of presumption which yet may not be matters of conviction, so it is necessary that all proceedings thereabout be managed with *exceeding tenderness* toward those that may be complained of, especially if they have been persons formerly of an unblemished reputation.

Shall we find this "tenderness" in the Salem court ?

V. When the first inquiry is made into the circumstances of such as may lye under the just suspicion of witchcrafts, we could wish that there may be admitted as little as possible of such *noise*, company, and openess, as may too hastily expose them that are examined, and that there may be nothing used as a test for the trial of the suspected, the lawfulness whereof may be doubted by the people of God, but that the directions given by such judicious writers as Perkins and Bernard may be observed.

Perkins gives sixteen rules for discovering witches epitomized in "Wonders of the Invisible World," London, 1862, p. 30. Any man to-day would willingly be tried by them, if fairly applied.

VI. Presumptions, whereupon persons may be committed, and much more convictions, whereupon persons may be condemned as guilty of witchcraft, ought certainly to be



more considerable than barely the accused persons being represented by a *spectre* unto the afflicted ; inasmuch as it is an undoubted and a notorious thing, that a *dæmon* may by God's permission appear even to ill purposes in the shape of an *innocent*, yea, and a virtuous man. Nor can we esteem alterations made in the sufferers by a look or touch of the accused to be an infallible evidence of guilt, but frequently liable to be abused by the Devil's legerdemain.

The ministers fought against "spectre evidence ;" but it *was* in fact the only fatal evidence that was rendered at all.

VII. We know not whether some remarkable affronts given the devils, by our disbelieving those testimonies, whose whole force and strength is from them alone, may not *put a period* unto the progress of the dreadful calamity begun upon us, in the accusation of so many persons, whereof some, we hope, are yet clear from the great transactions laid to their charge.

"A period" would have been put to it, had they obeyed this clerical suggestion.

VIII. Nevertheless, we cannot but humbly recommend unto the government the speedy and vigorous prosecutions of such as have rendered themselves obnoxious, according to the directions given in the laws of God, and the wholesome statutes of the English nation, for the detection of witchcraft.

This was the only recommendation obeyed by the magistrates in any particular.

Such was the renowned "advice" of the fore-



most preachers of New England to its representative lawyers. Are the principles here announced more bitter than the practices of that bar to which they were sent? Did they aggravate the existing frenzy? Did they not rather by every paragraph, except the last and those written for the sake of courtesy, — by every paragraph *protest* against the legalized excess of the day? It wrongs the ministry of New England to lay upon them a heavy burden of blame for the agonies that were then endured. They believed in witchcraft, it is true; but they always lifted their voices for moderation and kindness.

Cotton Mather himself, who has been called the "prime instigator" of those gloomy prosecutions, was the author of this advice from the ministers. In a long letter written by him, May 31, 1692, to John Richards, one of the judges, before the first sentence of death had been pronounced, he "most humbly begs him in the management of the affair, not to lay more stresse upon pure spectre testimony than it will bear," saying, "It is very certain, that the divells have sometimes represented the shapes of persons not onely innocent, but also very vertuous." He was even afraid of being accused as an apologist of the sin. "Perhaps there are wise

and good men, that may be ready to stile him, that shall advance this caution, *A Witch Advocate*; but, in the winding up, this caution will certainly be wished for." Devoutely it was wished in "the winding up" that it had been heeded!

And he even advanced the almost heretical notion, that a plain confession may not prove the confessor a witch. "A person of a sagacity many times thirty furlongs lesse than yours, will easily preceive what confession may be credible, and what may be the result of only a delirious brain or a discontented heart." No custom was more common than to test the accused, by requiring him to repeat the Lord's Prayer. If he made the slightest slip, it was counted as evidence against him. In the preliminary trials, one had stood the embarrassing test perfectly, except that she had said unwittingly, "Deliver us from *all* evil." Here was supposed to be a petition designedly perverted to include the punishment to which she was justly exposed. In another attempt, she blundered more impiously, saying, "Our Father which art in heaven, *hollowed* be thy name;" a petition that God's name might be *void* and dishonored, and "so a curse rather than a prayer." But Cotton Mather said of this experiment, "Make no evidence of it,

but onely use it for confounding the lispig witches to *give a reason* why they cannot, even with prompting, repeat those heavenly composures." He goes one step farther, and suggests a venturesome notion for his day, saying this: "It is worth considering whether there be a necessity alwayes by exterpacions by halter or fagott (to punish) every wretched creature that shall be hooked into some degrees of witchcraft; what if some of the lesser criminalls be onely scourged with lesser punishments?"

This invaluable letter, which has come to light in a recent publication of the Massachusetts Historical Society, shows conclusively that the reverend author was not a hard-hearted fanatic, but an earnest, thoughtful seeker for a bloodless deliverance from the impending fury.

Thirty years after, we find him still in advance of his age, advocating, at the risk of his life, the practice of inoculation as a safeguard against small-pox. So odious was this reform to the medical world, that one man, at least, became his mortal foe. He threw into his room a hand-grenade, which would certainly have killed him, had it chanced to explode.

But his indefatigable pen, which, before he died, had written 382 books, wrote on unchecked. This



resolute sentiment was then inscribed : " A spiteful town and poisoned country can't extinguish my poor studies to do good in the world ! " Says Mr. Poole, " The ministers generally, and he especially, favored inoculation, basing their arguments on medical science. The doctors, with one exception, opposed it with the utmost vehemence, on theological grounds. The ministers and the lawyers had stood in about this relation respecting the legality of witch trials. "

The delicate sense of Mr. Longfellow, whose melodious verse suggested this little book, discerned, among the first of modern scholars, the real truth about Mather's relation to witchcraft. The words he put into the mouth of this remarkable man are not sharp and bloody words, but those which are eloquent with great compassion and grief.

The frequent journeys which he made at that time from Boston to Salem were designed for the tender ministrations of the prison-cell, and not to goad on the attorneys of judgment. Their pace was too swift for him already ; and we have the most affecting evidence that he was often welcomed to the dungeons of the doomed.

But we do not claim for the author of " Wonders of the Invisible World " exemption from the com-



mon delusion. If he was more kind, he was also more credulous, than most of his time. He believed that devils were actually abroad in many a tangible human frame. This business, he wrote, though "managed in imagination, yet may not be called imaginary. The effects are dreadfully real. Our deare neighbours are most really tormented, really murdered, and really acquainted with hidden things, which are afterwards proved plainly to have been realities."

But is it wise for us of to-day to laugh at the notion that there was any thing mysterious in those appalling scenes? A merry old English judge might dispose of a crazy and scared wretch, who was pronounced a witch because of the romantic fact that she had ridden a broomstick through the air, with such a happy sentence as this: "That she was free to go, and to ride broomsticks as often as she pleased; for he knew no law against it"! But here was something more than broomsticks and aerial journeys. Preternatural events were exhibited daily before the eyes of multitudes of sensible and honest people. No doubt there was much fraud and mischief mingled in with these manœuvres, especially of the girls; but, sifting this completely out by rigid research, will

there not still remain a residuum of unexplained mystery?

A contemporary author, whom Mr. Chandler quotes approvingly, cannot be charged with great extravagance in the following assumption: "Flashy people may burlesque these things; but when hundreds of the most sober people, in a country where they have as much mother-wit certainly as the rest of mankind, know them to be true, nothing but the absurd and froward spirit of Sadducism can question them."

It is a doctrine of calm philosophy, that the spiritual and natural worlds, acting and re-acting upon each other, are separated by the thinnest veil. While enthusiasm alone credits all the marvels which fly to our ears, that is a stolid mind which denies the existence of every thing it is not able to fathom. Would not men be better to believe in all the sprites that have peopled the realm of fancy, rather than to believe that there is nothing in the universe but dust? When our senses are shut, there is a world to be observed, which is beyond the senses when they are keen-sighted and awake. With the glad vision of eyeless Milton, we rejoice to find companions in every solitude. It is a beautiful thought, —

"Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth  
Unseen, both when we wake and when we sleep."

In the last week of June the court met again : five were tried and convicted at this session. They were all hanged July 19. One of these was Rebecca Nourse. Her distinguished virtues and saint-like bearing staggered the jurors, as they had the magistrates before. In spite of the monstrous testimony of the accusers, the clamors of the outside crowd, and the bias of the court itself, they brought in a verdict of "Not guilty." The wrestling of judgment at this point seems amazing to us. Immediately all the children and others afflicted, within and without the court, set up a hideous outcry, and wallowed in horrible antics. One judge expressed himself dissatisfied, then another. Then the chief-justice, who, though a man of rectitude, always seemed to be bent on convictions, suggested that one petty item of testimony had not been duly considered, and sent the jury out again : they returned with a verdict of "Guilty." Surely justice had fled from that court.

There is a tradition, that the body of this poor woman was sought out, under the secrecy of night, and borne in tender arms across the fields to the burial-plot next her own home. Her sunken grave



still is pointed out, and the oaken house in which she lived still stands.

On the 5th of August, six were tried and condemned. These were all executed on the 19th, excepting one. Rev. George Burroughs, John Proctor, and George Jacobs, Sen., were among this ill-fated band.

Mr. Burroughs was condemned for "certain detestable arts, called witchcraft and sorceries, by which Anne Putnam was and is tortured, afflicted, pined, consumed, wasted, and tormented." At times the children appeared to be struck dumb by his malign power. "What hinders these witnesses," demanded Stoughton, "from giving their testimony?" "I suppose the devil," Burroughs replied. "How comes the devil," was the grim retort, "so loath to have any testimony borne against *you*?" He had murdered his two wives, who had already died, and also the wife and daughter of Lawson, his successor as village-pastor. The man was thunderstruck at such unheard-of lies. Said Ann, "One wife he stabbed under her left arm, and put a piece of sealing-wax on the wound; and she pulled aside the winding-sheet, and showed me the place"! He was chaplain at the diabolical banquets of the time. And with these



spectral fancies were also mingled strange stories about his monstrous strength, "being a little man." He had "lifted a gun of six-foot barrel, putting the fore-finger of his right hand into the muzzle of said gun," and holding it out at arms' length, "only with that finger." He had also taken up "a full barrel of molasses with but two of the fingers of one of his hands in the bung," and carried it "from the stage-head to the door at the end of the stage." It is doubtful whether he was condemned for murder or for lifting a "barrel of molasses."

In company with others he rode in a cart to the fatal hill. Upon the ladder he made a calm and powerful address, refuting the folly of the day "with such solemn and serious expressions as were the admiration of all present." He then offered up a wonderful prayer, concluding with the Lord's prayer, which he repeated correctly with thrilling intonations. Such was his "fervency of spirit," that many were affected to tears, and were at one time resolved to prevent the execution. But, at this moment, "the accusers said the black man stood by and dictated to him;" and so the rising sympathy was quelled, and the man of God went to his long home.

It was well known that a confession of witchcraft,

and a formal renunciation of it, would clear the accused from its fatal consequences: those only who denied their guilt were obdurate wretches; others relenting were released. "More than one twenty confessed that they had signed unto a book which the devil showed them, and engaged in his hellish design of bewitching and ruining our land." Now, we need not assume that these confessions were the result solely of the instinct of self-preservation. They were not all deliberate falsehoods. In that dread storm of delusion, when masses of horror hung like inky clouds over every home, and a thousand preternatural sounds reverberated in every ear; when a wife and a daughter beloved could accuse the husband and father of the accursed sin, and nearest and dearest friends—as was actually the case in several instances—were the most positive in their charges, especially when summoned to confront at the court a multitude of faces, pale with fury or with fright, and to account for the more appalling and ghastly antics of the girls,—it is more than probable that some were self-deceived, and really believed that they were agents of the diabolical powers. But still more honor is due to those who stood firm in such a trial. They proved themselves possessors of minds that were

wise and strongly poised, and of characters that were truly sublime. The men who steadily refused to take that lie upon their lips earned well the name of martyrs, — noble martyrs to the very spirit of truth. Witch Hill is the Smithfield of America.

A petition, signed by a great majority of the neighbors of Proctor, was presented at court in his behalf: it is evidence to show that the severities of the prosecutions are chargeable, not more upon the community of Salem than upon the government at large. He never would have been condemned had their will had its way. Mr. Proctor wrote a letter from his prison-cell to five of the most prominent clergymen in the State, imploring their intervention for a new trial, and a change of magistrates. These clergymen were *known* to be opposed to the excesses of the prosecutions. Increase Mather was supposed, in heart, to disapprove them altogether. Samuel Willard, of the Old South Church in Boston, "one of the most revered and beloved ministers in the land," was so notable in his opposition to them, that the "afflicted children" actually began to "cry out upon" him. They were speedily hushed by the incredulous court. "Indeed," says Mr. Upham, "the truth is, that the judges, magistrates, and legislature were



as much to blame in this whole business as the ministers, and much more slow to come to their senses and make amends for their wrong-doing."

During September, fifteen were tried and convicted: eight of these were executed Sept. 22. Rev. Mr. Noyes, of the First Church in Salem, turning to the strangled bodies, is represented to have said, "What a sad thing it is to see eight firebrands of hell hanging there!" It was the last time that his eyes were pained by such a sight.

Three days before, old Giles Corey had suffered a fate that shocked the hearts of all good men. He had refused to plead to his indictment, and so was pressed to death.

His object in this refusal was to *prevent* a trial. He knew it could issue in nothing but a conviction. It would certainly fasten upon his name the stigma of a felony: it would forfeit the right of his children to his estates.

During the time of his imprisonment, waves of painful remembrance had rolled upon his soul. His life, he thought, had issued in little good; he had been always misunderstood; his influence had been all wrong, though his heart was often right. Since his conversion, there had not been time enough to approve the sincerity of his new profes-



sion. And then that martyred wife! Though he had never been opposed to her personally, yet the delusion to which he had at first lent himself so violently had swept her away. Two of his sons-in-law turned against her in that hour of her extremity. With unnatural hearts, they even urged her conviction. Sadly musing on all these facts, his mind gradually settled upon a lofty resolve. He determined to expiate his errors by a deed that would challenge the respect of his fellow-men, and that would perhaps, with an irresistible voice, rebuke the iniquitous court: at least, it would save his property to his children. Forthwith he caused a deed to be drawn up in the prison. It was done with the utmost formality, to make certain the effect. It conveyed to Cleaves and Moulton, the two sons who had been true to his wife, his entire estate of "movables and lands." It was signed and sealed in the presence of competent witnesses, and duly recorded as a complete transaction. Then he was ready to attest his determination not to break this instrument by the attainder of a felon's death. He made up his mind not to be tried.

He was summoned before the court to plead to his indictment, "Guilty," or "Not Guilty." He uttered not one word in reply. There he stood mute

as a stone : and no power upon the earth could unseal his iron lips. To have pleaded would have recognized the legality of that tribunal, and have made him, in some sense, a party to their proceedings. They represented the passions of the deluded multitude. He defied their right to give judgment. That dumb mouth spoke in thunder-tones of remonstrance.

When Giles Corey took this immovable position, but one course seemed open to the court. The usage in England was to give the recusant three separate opportunities to plead, each time announcing the dread penalty of continued contumacy. After the third trial, if he still remained speechless, he was remanded to prison, with the sentence of *peine forte et dure*. He would then be thrown upon his back, and weights of stone or iron would be piled upon him. There he would be kept, sometimes for days, the weights gradually increasing, until the sufferer had consented to plead, or had been pressed to death.

No details of this enormity — once only committed in our land — have come from the recess of that prison-cell in Salem. The rumor is, that the closing scene of the tragedy was in a secluded field near by ; that the heroic man told them it was no use

to expect him to plead, they might as well pile on the rocks at once. And so they did ; and so he died, — an old man of more than eighty-one years, — braving the utmost torture that the human frame can bear, until his body was crushed, and his unconquered spirit had fled forever away.

A part of the weird ditty quoted before refers to this heroic death : —

“Giles Corey was a wizzard strong,  
A stubborn wretch was he ;  
And fitt was he to hang on high  
Upon y<sup>e</sup> Locust Tree.

So when before y<sup>e</sup> Magistrates  
For tryall he did come,  
He would no true confession make,  
But was compleately dumbe.

‘Giles Corey,’ said y<sup>e</sup> magistrate,  
‘What hast thou heare to pleade  
To these who now accuse thy soule  
Of Crymes and horrid deed?’

Giles Corey, he sayde not a word :  
No single word spake he.

‘Giles Corey,’ sayth y<sup>e</sup> magistrate,  
‘We’ll press it out of thee.’

They got them then a heavy beam ;  
They layde it on his breast ;



They loaded it with heavy stones ;  
And hard upon him prest.

‘More weight,’ now sayd this wretched man :  
‘More weight,’ again he cryed.  
And he did no confession make ;  
But wickedlie he dyed.”

This horrible event was one of the last acts in the tragedy. It was too much for a compassionate people longer to enact. At this point, we would that the curtain of oblivion might fall, and hide the whole black past from our view. But the hand of remorseless history drags it aside. We must recognize that past as a veritable transaction in the annals of our Puritan State.

Mr. Upham makes much of the artful adroitness with which the order of incidents was arranged, and the supplies of excitement were furnished at the critical moments throughout. He thinks that some power behind the scenes, perhaps in Ann Putnam’s family, perhaps Mr. Parris himself, managed the dreadful drama from the beginning. There would be reasons for such a suspicion, did it not involve a personal depravity so inhuman as to be almost incredible. There was, indeed, a sequence of events calculated every way to intensify the frenzy.

But at length the tide was to turn : Reason was to resume her sway. The girls, over-estimating their power, struck too high. They could not make the people believe that Rev. Mr. Williard was guilty. Then a member of Increase Mather's family was accused. Then the wife of Sir William Phips himself, was "cried out upon." Finally, the wife of Rev. Mr. Hale of Beverly was charged with the crime. This act seemed to break the spell. She was a lady known in all the region round,—one of such eminent graces, that it *could not* be that she was a witch. Mr. Hale had been a leading, and, we believe on his own confession, a sincere prosecutor ; but he *knew* that his wife was innocent, and, he turned at once his powerful influence against the current. *The accusers had perjured themselves :* this conviction spread suddenly through the community. The people had been duped. It was all a mistake. Oh what a mistake ! And the wild storm quelled. In a moment that mortal delirium was checked. The whole delusion vanished.

Gov. Phips saw that a stop must be put to the prosecutions. The Court of Oyer and Terminer met no more. The Superior Court, which met in January, 1693, convicted only three out of fifty indicted. These three escaped execution.

Other trials resulted uniformly in acquittal. In May, the Governor, by proclamation, discharged all who were imprisoned for witchcraft. "Such a jail-delivery was never known in New England." The number set at liberty was about one hundred and fifty. Two had died in prison. Twenty, including Giles Corey, had been executed. Many had escaped from confinement. In all, there must have been nearly three hundred arrested and committed for this imaginary crime.

The calamitous effects of the delusion were long and painfully felt. Those pure and precious lives could not be recalled to earth. From many a household, domestic happiness had forever fled. The retrospect indeed was fearful. Gentle women had been torn from their families to suffer the rigors of a public trial, if not judicial death. Laboring men had been arrested in their needful toils. The industry of the youthful State had been crippled. A whole summer had been lost to the husbandmen. Their fields had been left unploughed, and they had no harvests to gather in. The excitement of the hour consumed every other interest. It left them destitute at its departure.

Confidence in the safeguards of the community had also been disturbed. The protecting hand of



the General Court had not defended the innocent. The calm voice of science had become an accuser. The white ermine of justice had been stained by needless blood. The altars of our holy religion had afforded no asylum to the distressed. Law-givers, physicians, magistrates, and ministers, instead of repelling the woful superstition, had united together to strengthen it. It was not well for the various causes they maintained. There was hardly one social good which was not injured by the shock it then received.

But, amid all that is sorrowful in this dark scene, there are facts which stand out in the pure and pleasant light.

One is the genuine penitence of those misguided men. It is beautiful to us. Most of the girls turned out ill. Several of them became profligates. Only one, Ann Putnam, made a confession. Chief-Justice Stoughton clung proudly to the position that his decisions were right throughout. Some few of the clergymen contended to the end of life that these were veritable "wonders of the invisible world." Mr. Parris was never known to repent the part he performed. He was soon forced to leave his charge on account of the prejudice then engendered. He died in obscurity. But, with these

exceptions, the rest of the prosecutors made most honorable acknowledgments of the injuries they had done. Their expression of feeling was not immediate. Great sorrow sealed their lips. Words, they feared, would kindle the rage, rather than soothe the grief, of those who had suffered such remediless wrongs. But their action at length was unequivocal.

In 1696, a proclamation for a public fast was issued, especially in view of "the late tragedy," that "God would humble us therefor, and pardon all the errors of his servants and people. That he would show us what we know not, and help us wherein we have done amiss to do so no more." It is couched throughout in most affecting terms.

Nearly fifty years after, the General Court adopted a measure, appointing a committee to inquire into the condition of those families which might have suffered in "the calamity of 1692;" reversing the attainders, and expressing a strong desire to compensate them either by money or a township of land.

The two churches which had been most deeply implicated tearfully revoked the sentences which had excommunicated those convicted of witchcraft, "that they be no longer a reproach to their mem-

ory, and an occasion of grief to their children." They conducted with marked kindness towards the surviving friends. The clergymen of Essex County, with but one or two exceptions, signed a petition, begging that the infamy of a criminal trial might not rest on the accused, or appear on the court-records.

And the twelve jurors, whose verdict had been the doom of so many guiltless persons, united in a declaration, subscribed by them all, expressing their grief for what they had done. This remarkable paper exhibits the utmost tenderness of conscience, and asks forgiveness of God and men in terms of such heartfelt contrition that it disarms our indignation altogether.

But the conduct of Judge Sewall claims our special admiration in this respect. Through his whole life, after that fatal court, he observed annually, in private, a day of humiliation and prayer, in view of his participation in it. On the day of the general Fast, he rose in his own pew in the Old South, in Boston, and, before the whole congregation, proceeded to the pulpit, and handed the pastor a written confession of the wrong into which he had been led, and an earnest request that his brethren would unite with him in devout supplications that



it might not bring down the displeasure of God upon his country, his family, or himself. He remained standing during the public reading of the paper. Such an example of noble penitence throws a bright gleam over all that melancholy past.

And now, may not the descendants of a godly ancestry, while they recall the melancholy errors by which the Fathers were beset, be allowed, in the same spirit of trust which distinguished them, to cherish the belief, that even this tragical calamity was permitted for purposes of wisdom and benevolence? When such a moral desolation sweeps over a great society of men, it does not leave them without some beneficent results. The thunder-storm does its work; the atmosphere is cleared; the sun shines forth at length, revealing not only the spoils of death, but the pure elements of a better life.

And what was God's good design in permitting this outbreak of a fatal superstition? For our answer to such an inquiry, we are pointed at once to a great fact, which soon became apparent: *by that very fury the superstition itself was forever exploded.* No gentler means than this, perhaps, could have accomplished such a happy end. It may be, that those appalling enormities were necessary to drive out the deeply-lodged error from human be-

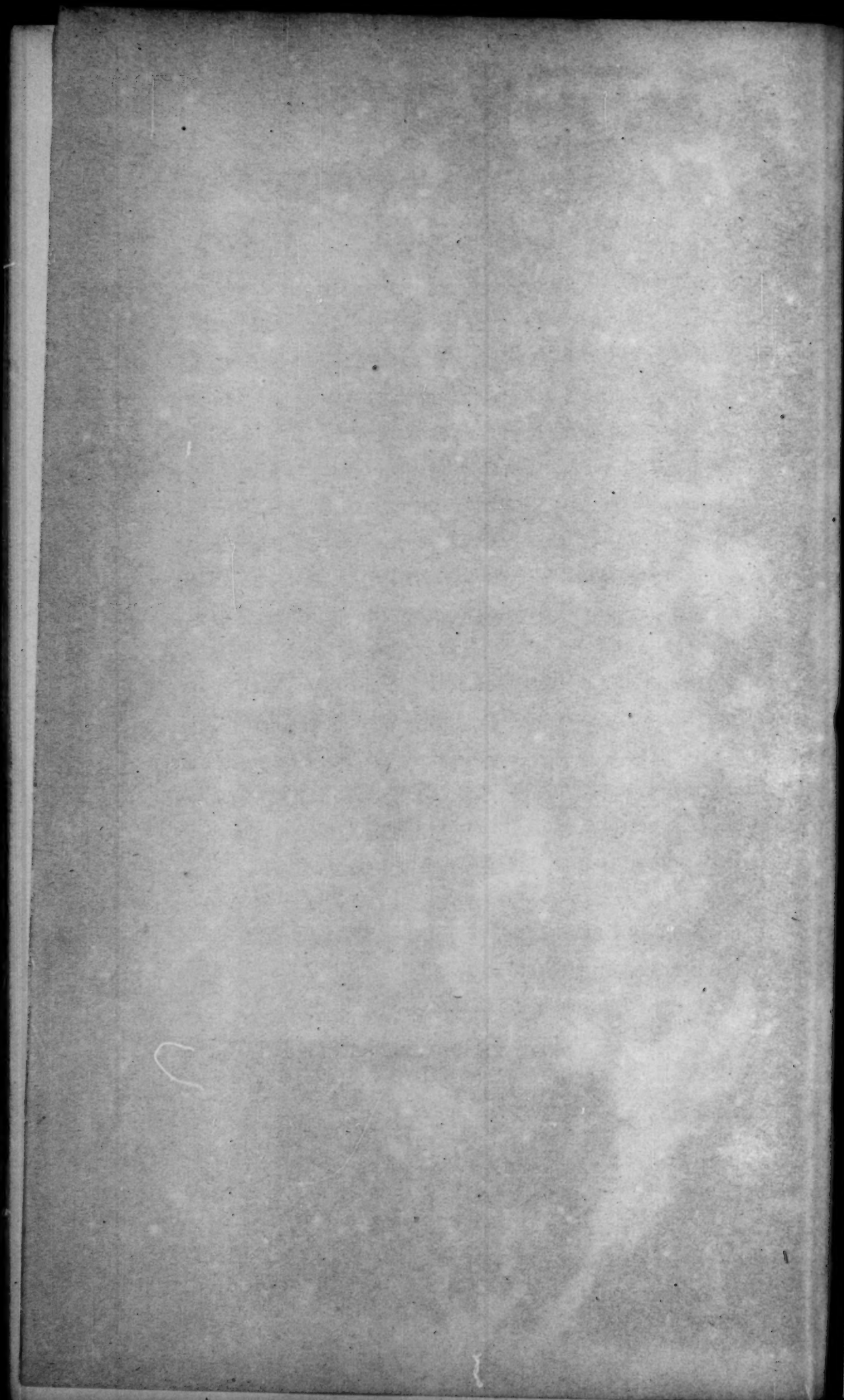
liefs. We of the present day need not treat it with ridicule or reproaches. In the seventeenth century it was invested with an awful solemnity. It is not for us to denounce that generation. All delusion has not yet departed from the earth. There are false and fatal systems of belief among many men to-day. We pray that they may not require so terrible a refutation as did this. But arguments seem powerless to destroy them. In the well-chosen words of another, "Error is seldom overthrown by mere reasoning. It yields only to the logic of events." The learning and wit of all the world combined could not have rooted the witchcraft superstition out of the minds of men. A practical demonstration of its deformities and horrors, such as was held up then to the view of the people everywhere, alone could give it a death-blow. This was the final cause of the witchcraft delusion. It makes it one of the greatest landmarks in the moral history of mankind. It makes it a fair and trustful augury that God is leading humanity, by *every* providence, out of the gloom of ages, into the cloudless lustre of the "golden year."





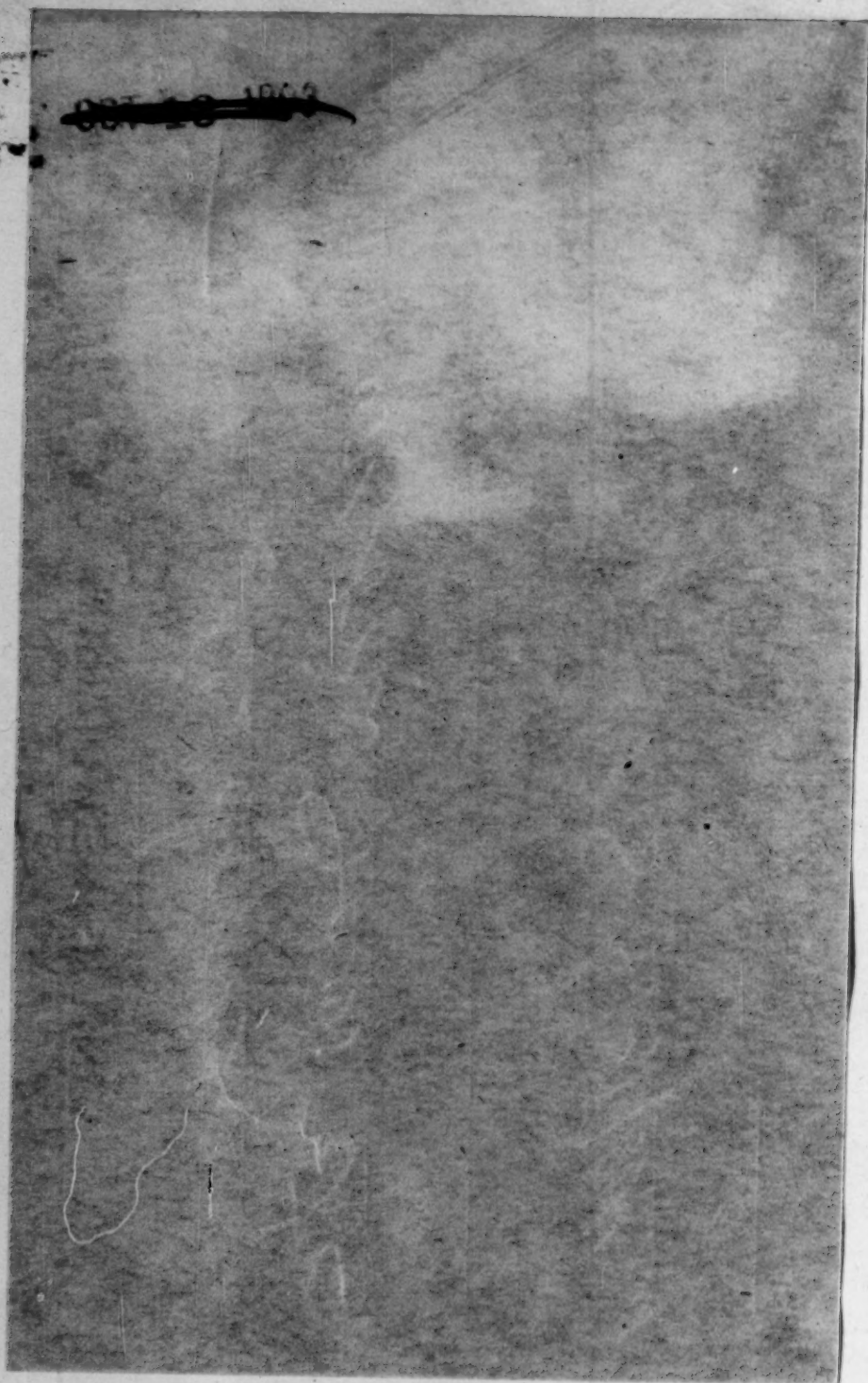
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